



邂逅の刻

苦勞譚

くろ
う
た
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戦国
小町玉

せんごくこまち

夾竹桃

イラスト

平沢下戸



Chronicles of The Hardships of Komachi in The Sengoku Era

— Sengoku Komachi Kurou Tan —

**- Volume 1 -
Eight Year of Eiroku Era,
Fateful Encounter with Lord Nobunaga**

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[Yado Inn]

- STORY -

One fateful day, a girl time slipped into the Sengoku Era.

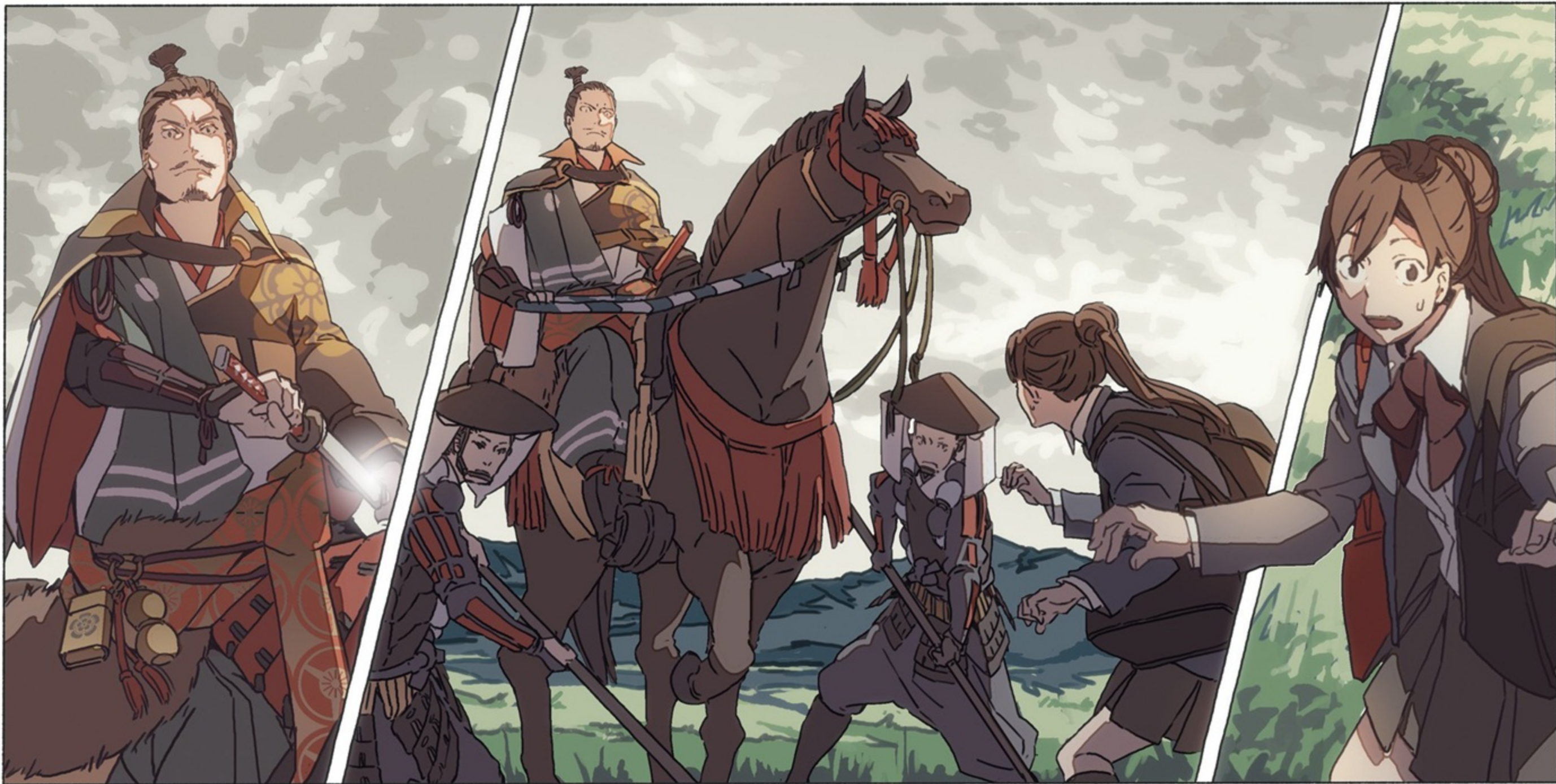
It was an abrupt enough event to be dubbed god's whim, done to sate hellish boredom.

The girl has no power to change the world.

She was a very ordinary, common, and plain girl that can be found anywhere.

And that girl can do no more than a single thing.

Survive the Sengoku Era — — — that's all.



Chapter 1

Year 1565, Mid-March

If I, by chance, met with a historical figure I wonder how happy I would be.

Only children would believe in such a dream, a dream such as that coming true was impossible in the highest degree.

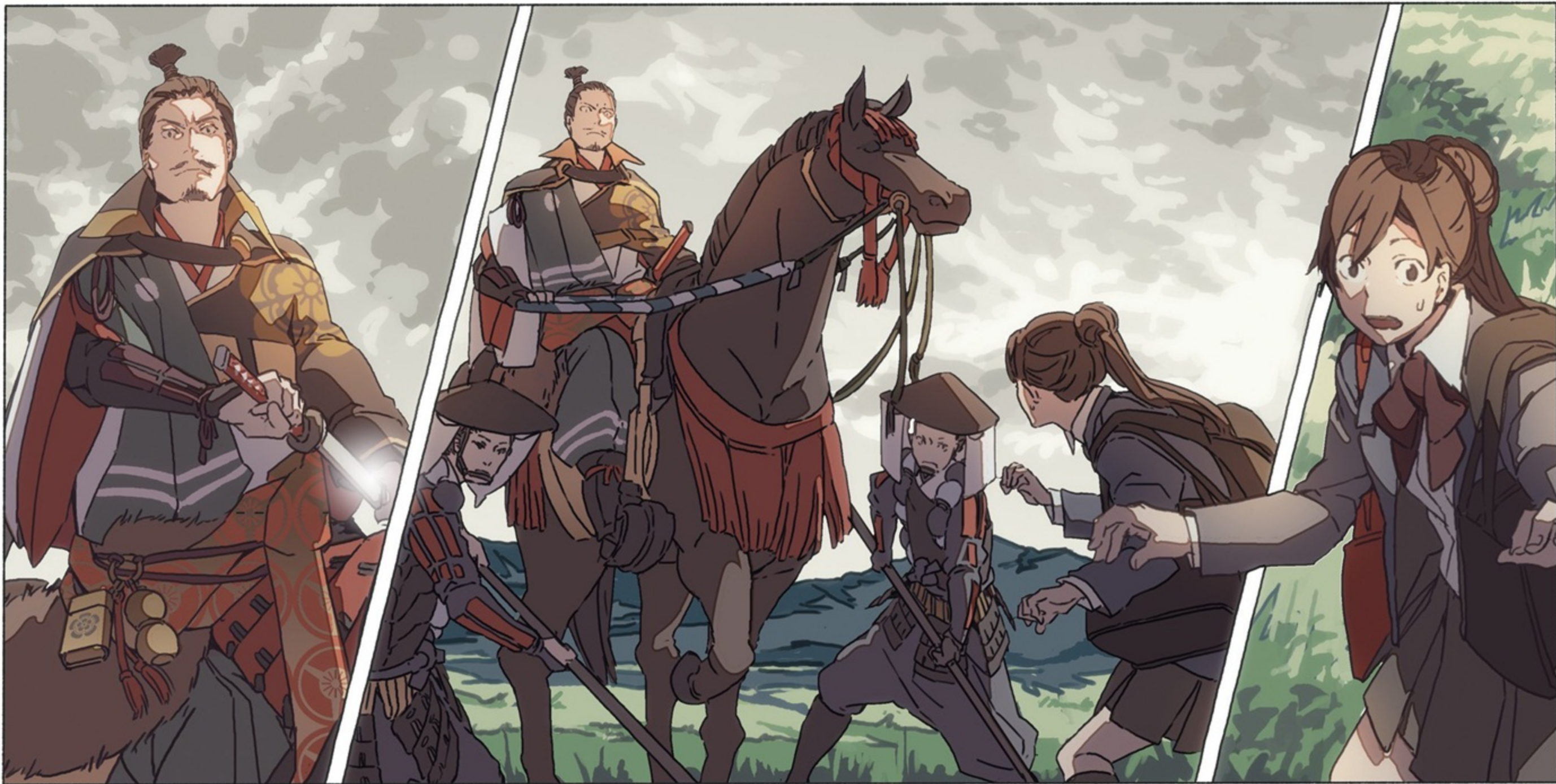
Such a thing has obviously never happened to me, and I can only think “if only”.

During those wistful times, I would write in my notebook about a variety of things until I was satisfied.

From society’s perspective, however, my notebook would look to be full of nothing but mad delusions.

But, starting today, those notes are unnecessary.

After all—.



“You, who the hell are you?” [Strange Voice]

I was suddenly transported through time.

Wh, wh-wh-what is going on...!

The girl reviewed her current circumstances and did a double-take at the person in front of her.

(Let's see, I was definitely helping out grandpa with the farming; I was collecting the mature crops, and then I was sowing new seeds... after that, when I was taking home grandma's Nitsuke, big sis called out to me...)^[1]

After retracing her steps, she still couldn't find the reason why she slipped through time. But, in the first place, such a difficult concept as warping through time cannot be clearly comprehended anyway.

(Then, when I was carrying big sister's military books, I decided to take a shortcut, since they were so heavy. So I cut through the animal trail that leads to the back of the house...)

The girl looked all around her. Whether it was to the left or right, or any direction at all, there was only a thick forest visible. Not only that, but the trees that grew near her house were of an entirely different species.

“Girl. Stop wasting my time.” [Strange Voice]

Panic began to shoot throughout her body, but she managed to calm down thanks to the loud voice from above her.

When she timidly turned towards the source of the voice, a man who looked to be about 30-years old called out to her; with a vein bulging on his forehead.

“I'll ask one more time. You, what's your name?” [Man]

The man put his hand on his sword's hilt. In that moment, she realized who this person was. A person she was never supposed to meet; his name is...

“Oda Kazusanosuke Saburo Taira Ason Nobunaga.....” ^[2]

Exactly then, there was the sound of the katana being drawn and slashed.

The girl instantly felt the danger, focused with all of her willpower, and jumped directly to the side.

“You... I have judged that your life is forfeit!” [Nobunaga]

The man who slashed at me declared that with a blue vein still popping out on his forehead. His intentions are as clear as daylight, if given the chance, he would kill me without a doubt.

(Hiee---!! Thinking about the Sengoku Era, I shouldn't have spoken a noble's final name!)

In the Sengoku Era, the names of the Daimyo-class were very different from the perspective of a modern Japanese person. For example, Oda Nobunaga's official name was Oda Kazusanoske, descendant of Taira no Ason, Nobunaga. In fact, the name Oda was also said to double as a surname and the name of a noble house, and that persons born as an Oda would belong to the house, not to the surname. As for Kazusanoske, it was an alias, used as a sort of public name that was self-proclaimed. Saburo was used to refer to the senior child in a family's lineage, and parents would usually refer to their eldest using this name. Modern Japanese names have a close relation to this older usage of Saburo. Taira was the name of an extremely powerful samurai clan, with a grand lineage, and Nobunaga often used it- without permission- to improve his prestige. Ason was more of a title than a name, showing the bearer's relationship to the Imperial court.

And now, we've come to the final name. Nobunaga is the man's real name. The so called “real” name had another, hidden meaning in the Sengoku Era. It was known as “the loathed name”. A person's real name heavily represented their personality. Therefore, it was considered courteous to never refer to someone by their real name. In fact, no matter how you look at it, this girl broke a serious taboo just now. That is to say, she was insolent towards the other person to the highest degree.

“I'm, I'm, I'm sorry~! Kazusanosuke-sama! Please! Please, forgive me~~~~!!! “[Girl]

The correct way to refer to others, in the case of young men, was to call them by the name of their position as an honorific title. In dramas, manga, and anime, Hideyoshi would often be depicted calling this man “Nobunaga-sama!” but the truth is, if such a thing were to actually happen, Hideyoshi (or whoever said the “real” name) would be seriously beaten on the spot. There were only a few cases where his real name could

be properly used, such as when a superior addressed him, or in the official documents of the Imperial Court. However, on those documents, his name was actually written as [Taira Ason Nobunaga], to refer to his relationship to the Imperial Court.

“...Under ordinary circumstances, I would strike you down on the spot. However, I’m bewildered by your strange appearance. For the third time now, state your name.” [Nobunaga]

Nobunaga sheathed his katana, his vein almost bursting in irritation. The girl clearly realized that her next mistake will lead to a “bad end”, or in other words, another slip-up, and she will die. With trembling lips, the girl said...

“Shizuko... Ayanokouji Shizuko” [Shizuko]



Shizuko fell prostrate and gave her name while in dogeza. Nobunaga pondered this strange... Shizuko.

(What a strange look. I have never seen such bizarre clothing... is it perhaps from Nanban?) ^[3]

It was unknown whether she was a friend or a foe, but she was certainly too stupid to be a spy, reflected Nobunaga. She was terrified just a moment ago, and her movements were easy to deal with as well.

(...People from the Namban lands have unique skills. If I play my cards right...)

“Shizuko, is it?... You, where is your homeland?” [Nobunaga]

“Ha? Homeland? Oh, do you mean birthplace? Umm... I’m from Tokyo City” [Shizuko]

“*Tokyo-to?*”^[4]

This person had an unknown name and clothing. From what Nobunaga gathered, he assumed that Shizuko was a person from Nanban. If that was indeed the case, it would be more valuable to keep her alive, and exploit her for her foreign knowledge, rather than kill her for her insolence.

“What a strange name. Well, that concludes our discussion. I will depart.” [Nobunaga]

“Eh?”

However, the meek-spirited Shizuko who obediently trailed behind him didn't notice Nobunaga's scheme at all. From an outsider's perspective, Shizuko has no place that she belongs to.

It's unnatural for a spy to be so stupid.

“Didn't you hear me? I told you to get out of the way. I'm about to return to the castle.”
[Nobunaga]

“Umm... Pardon me!” [Shizuko]

Unless she came under the protection of someone powerful, Shizuko certainly would perish in this Era of wars. Fortunately, she must have some sense of her current situation, and she will beg for my protection, thought Nobunaga.

“Um, I am sorry if this is sudden, but can I go with you?!” [Shizuko]

“Of course not.” [Nobunaga]

“Gan!” (Sfx sound for shock)

“Why should I permit a suspicious person like you into my castle?” [Nobunaga]

“Err, umm, um...” [Shizuko]

Shizuko was nervously thinking about what she could possibly offer to this great man. Nobunaga, who was watching Shizuko's fretting, curved his lip into a thin smile.

(I will receive Nanban technology from this girl. Using it, I can build a country that can rival the world.)

“Ah! Y, Ye, Yes! That's right. I'm experienced in agriculture... I can help you in that area!”
[Shizuko]

“...Ho~u, crops, huh?” [Nobunaga]

(Not a bad proposal. I'm not too terribly interested in the fare of my table, but raising my territory's food self-sufficiency will improve my finances. In fact, making sure the

commoners have enough to eat will circumvent a peasant revolt.)

During the Sengoku Era, any peasant revolts were said to be an endless source of worry to the lords. If the farmers were to rise up, the productivity of the fiefs would fall drastically. In other words, the amount of tribute that could be collected would be reduced.

“Very well. Use your talents for me alone. The moment you leave my service is the moment you perish. Do not forget this.” [Nobunaga]

“Ye-yes!” [Shizuko]

Nobunaga’s words carried a heavy meaning. In short, if you betray me, I will kill you. If you make a mistake, I will also kill you.

Shizuko’s mind was busy trying to make sense of her situation, and had not realized the true magnitude of her circumstances.

(Today has proved very fortuitous. I have received some of Nanban’s technology after all. The only issue is how to persuade Saru that it is worth it.) ^[5]



Shizuko trailed close behind Nobunaga while carrying her bag. Of course, she was on foot. She couldn’t ride a horse, so she had to endure trudging through the forest.

(Big Sis’s books... I want to throw them away, but if I do, she’ll kill me when I get back home...)

Big sis called me and ordered me to buy a book with a domineering tone. She wanted the “*Ancient to Modern Weapons Catalogue*”. My military maniac of a big sis already bought two books, but this catalogue was also in my bag.

(...I also have several sorts of seeds from Grandpa. AH! If I use those for Nobunaga...)

Historically, Nobunaga was known to be a short tempered man. If you were to happen to make a mistake, you would be cut in half on the spot. On the other hand, he possessed such innovative ideas that it was called heresy among the daimyo in the Sengoku Era. Keeping an arm’s length from strange and unknown things, he was

curious enough to observe them.

(If I'm not mistaken, sweet potato was only well established in Kagoshima starting in the Edo Period... In that case, sweet potato will be an "unknown thing" to Nobunaga) [6]

While adjusting her bag, Shizuko began quietly organizing the things she currently has on hand, so that they could be used as proper resources.

(Let's see, I have pumpkin, sweet corn, tomato, Komatsuna, red onion, and even sugarcane seeds from grandpa. Also, I have three mature sweet potatoes from the harvest, several types of chocolate and mixed fruit drop candies from the convenience store... alright!) [7]

I can do it, thought Shizuko. The sweet potatoes could be soaked in water, and seeds would surface and be ready to plant. Areas that have volcanic ash have strong vitality in the soil, and are the perfect place to plant crops. Sweet potatoes, however, are weak to cold weather, and Shizuko didn't know which area of Nobunaga's territory she was heading to. It would either be Mino Province or Owari Province.

(Owari Province is located near where the modern Tokaido Highway is, within the western part of Aichi prefecture. The climate is suited well enough to crops; and pumpkin, tomato, komatsuna don't need much nutrition and yield a large harvest. Sweet corn only needs water to thrive, but, will it really grow? And it's not clear as to when sugar was imported to Japan, so obtaining an easy supply of sugar via sugar cane can only be a good thing.)

The brilliantly colored tomato and sweet corn, the insane crop yield of sweet potatoes, pumpkin, and sugar cane. These are all "unknown things" to Nobunaga. Even Westerners (Nanban) are not yet fully understood either.

(Unlike the crops that have already been introduced in this era, these vegetables are created from modern science. Any new technique in agriculture would surely become highly prized here.)

Shizuka's knowledge and common sense differed greatly from what was common in Nobunaga's era. Naturally, this is why Nobunaga sought to exploit her. But, there was one problem.

(The women of this era didn't have many rights... did they?)

In the Sengoku Era, a woman's opinions were brushed aside. Putting it bluntly, women had no rights as human beings. So, things such as political marriages were only natural; a marriage based on choice was a fairytale in this era.

(If I want to live, I cannot afford to displease Nobunaga. However, if I stand out too much, and gain notable achievements, his subordinates will keep a watchful eye on me; that also can't be allowed. Th-This is hard~~~~!!)

It is necessary to make Nobunaga think, "She is too valuable to be allowed to roam free." If he becomes too interested in her, however, it will only serve to enrage his other subordinates. There has to be a perfect balance.

(Big sis told me that "There were two real enemies for soldiers, namely disease and hunger" so, if possible, I want to improve the food situation...)

Instead of using outstanding soldiers to earn achievements on the battlefield, if I simply raise the strength of all soldiers, he may not be displeased.

(I'm not sure how I can get back home. But no matter what, I have to survive!)

It can't be helped, thought Shizuko while she grasped her hand tightly. She had to survive this Sengoku Era and find a way to go back to her own time.

Footnotes:

1. Nitsuke: Fish poached in a broth of sweetened dashi, sometimes with miso.
2. Kazusanosuke is a given name. Taira is a clan, so his clan title. The Oda clan in the time of Oda Nobunaga (1534–1582) claimed descent from the Taira, by Taira no Chikazane, a grandson of Taira no Shigemori (1138–1179). Ason is a prestigious title (under the eight kabane system), initially conferred in the Nara period of the history of Japan, on princes who had been reduced to the commonalty. Ason is also a title.
3. Western Europe (esp. Spain and Portugal, their South-East Asian colonies, and their goods and people arriving in Japan via the colonies)
4. Tokyo at that time is not created yet. So, Japanese at that time won't know what Tokyo is. Fyi, the kanji for Tokyo Metropolitan is read as Tokyo-to and that is a legit name.
5. Saru is a nickname for Hashiba Hideyoshi
6. Kagoshima is a name of a place. Edo era, or Tokugawa era, is a division of the history of Japan when it was ruled by the shoguns of the Tokugawa family, running from 1603 to 1868. Characterized by strict social orders, isolationist foreign policies, and an increase in both environmental protection and the creation and popular enjoyment of arts and culture, Japanese society during this period was controlled by the Tokugawa shogunate and the country's 300 regional Daimyo.
7. Komatsuna (*Brassica rapa* var. *perviridis* or *komatsuna*) is a type of leaf vegetable. It is a variant of the same species as the common turnip. It is grown commercially in Japan and Taiwan; the name is from Japanese *komatsuna*. It is also known as Japanese Mustard Spinach and is usually stir-fried, pickled, boiled and added to soups or used fresh in salads. It is an excellent source of calcium. It is also used for fodder in some Asian countries.

Chapter 2

Year 1565 Late March

After the visit to Nobunaga's castle...

Watching that spectacle unfold before her, Shizuko could only let a dry laugh out. Oda Nobunaga was more quick-tempered than she thought. Suddenly having such an impression of him, Nobunaga overwhelmed her with vigor as strong as a muddy river.

I sent the man next to me a fleeting glance. It was a man around 50 who rode a horse, but his face showed no harsh aging. His name was Mori Sanzaemon Yoshinari, Nobunaga's number one most trusted military officer. It was said that no matter what obstacles Nobunaga faced, as long Mori was by his side, he would always feel reassured. In fact, the first vassal who received a castle from Nobunaga was Mori Sanzaemon Yoshinari.

Though, he looks like a humble old man..... but, if I say it out loud, I will be killed

When I looked back to the front, I saw around 30 people prostrating themselves. This was one of many farming villages you could find anywhere in this era. However, there were reasons for coming to this village.

“This year's tribute of land tax is less than half of the designated target. What on earth is the meaning of this?” [Mori]

Said a soldier while looking down at the old man, who looked every bit like a stereotypical old chief.

It was as he said, this village's annual tribute offering was really bad. It couldn't offer half of the designated target, furthermore, it was projected to become even worse for the following year. Since the situation has reached the level that it couldn't be overlooked, Nobunaga planned to destroy this village. But, that was the reason Shizuko was there.

Make this village offer an annual tribute. Otherwise, ship large quantities of crops from this village..... was the order?

When Nobunaga invited Shizuko to his castle to serve him, naturally, the military officers under his wing opposed that idea. Of course, Nobunaga seemed to understand their concerns too, he was broadly grinning and seemed to be holding in his laughter.

‘I’m not interested in such old traditions. I’ll use the things I can use... but I’ll throw away useless things without second thought. Shizuko possesses Nanban’s knowledge regarding agriculture. Demonstrate your talent to me’ [Nobunaga]

That alone silenced all of the opposing opinions. At Nobunaga’s attempt to trust Shizuko, his military officers offered objection. At Nobunaga’s assurances, that she would not serve as a military officer, made them feel relieved.

In the first place, a woman can’t act as a military officer..... how should I say it, I’ve never held a sword!

I feel like my big sister would gleefully jump to the battlefield with a sword in hand. Unfortunately, I wasn’t such a person. I was what people usually would refer to as a very ordinary commoner,, a girl with agricultural knowledge and experience in implementing said knowledge to some extent.

“Originally, it was supposed to be capital punishment, but my lord is very benevolent” [Mori]

So, the soldiers gazed toward Shizuko. Shizuko stepped forward -while knowing what that action means- and stood next to the soldier.

“You there, cultivate crops according to Ayanakouji Shizuko’s instructions” [Mori]

“Y-yes!” [Villager]

Surprised voices came from farmers. It was obvious, the one who was just introduced was a very young girl. It was impossible not to be surprised about it.

Well, even I would be the same~

“Any objections? If that is the case, then, I will have that person’s head instead” [Mori]

The soldiers suddenly pulled their swords out of their sheaths when I thought of such a thing. Deep-down, Shizuko was terrified because she had no control over her life or death, but if she made a strange face here she would become suspicious. So, she had

to feign a calm expression.

“N, no! It is not strange at all!” [Villager]

“Very Good!. Then, let’s get started immediately.” [Mori]

Eh~! So suddenly~!?

There were a lot of things that she wanted to retort to, but to Shizuko who had no real choice in the first place, she had to do as the soldiers ordered.

Cough “Ehem. Please show me the field first. And then, the village itself. Lastly, please go around village’s surroundings.” [Shizuko]

There was no other choice. Since she hadn’t found the way to go back yet, She had no choice but to be under Nobunaga’s protection. Shizuko – who had understood her own situation and had adapted to her environment- took a step forward.



Shizuko inspected the fields, the hovels, and the village’s surroundings. From that, Shizuko found out various things.

Even though the soil is not really bad, there is one problem..... because the land in this place is sloped towards the river, it seems nutrients for the soil will flow towards the river during rainfall.

To begin with, there was a reasonably sized river in the middle of the village. It separated the village into two sides. The west bank was where the villager’s houses were placed and the east bank was a place to cultivate crops. But, the village side was flat, and the farmland was at a slope. Actually, there were traces where water flowed to the fields directly, so they created gutters towards the river. Because of that, no matter how much they plowed the land, the necessary fertile soil would become thin.

Luckily, the land’s inclination is not that steep, we can avoid it by creating ridges. But since the necessary fertile soil is pretty much useless, we need to make compost first.

The schedule for planting the crops was around one week from today. Until then, it was necessary to make compost, but there was a problem regarding the needed

material.

There are only two cows in this village. I wonder whether the villagers are willing to put their livestock under joint property. However, two animals aren't enough.

Compost is usually made when manure produced by livestock such as cows, pigs, chickens, etc. are mixed together with additional materials such as rice straw and rice bran. Since human waste could be mixed together, Shizuko thought that compost made of domestic animal feces could be made without fail.

It would be better to prepare a big bucket there. There is no problem if we place it near the cows.....

“How is it, Shizuko-dono?” [Mori]

“Uhyai!!” [Shizuko]

Shizuko let out a strange voice as someone called to her from behind while she was thinking. When she turned around while blushing, there was Mori Yoshinari who was on horseback.

“Wa, wa wa...! First of all, it is necessary to perform maintenance, to obtain rich soil. If we are not keeping the soil in good condition, it will only repeat the same failures up till now” [Shizuko]

Shizuko babbled while in dogeza mode in a hurry. A gentle smile was showed, but as expected of a military officer from Sengoku era. Shizuko -who lived in the modern era- felt an incredible pressure from Mori Yoshinari.

“My lord placed a high expectation on Shizuko-dono. Please zealously answer that expectation” [Mori]

“Y, yes!” [Shizuko]

While nodding at Shizuko's answer, Mori Yoshinari shouted at the surrounding soldiers.

“Return to the castle!” [Mori]

“Yes, sir!” [Soldiers]

The soldiers, together with Mori Yoshinari, went out of the village with that shout. However, it was not all of them. A few of them remained.

Ah, perhaps they will be monitoring me. They won't trust me all of a sudden..... right~

While thinking like it was someone else problem, Shizuko began to organize her plans from now on.



Since the villagers were gathered, she decided to do a simple self-introduction. What she understood was, the number of men were 20, and the number of women were 10. Among the men, there was a skilled blacksmith, and three craftsman who could do carpentry. Because the village chief was in his early forties, the pure manpower was actually around 15 people.

Soil maintenance, collecting wood, and compost making, these tasks should be given to each group of five people. And the craftsmen will be making hand tools. In this era, agricultural tools are in a set, but this village's tools are lacking in number

Looking at them, everyone was thin due to malnutrition. Even the village chief who was said to be forty years old looked a lot older than he really was...

This year, the main crop will be sweet potatoes. It is highly nutritious, especially when used during famine..... that means.....

“Ah, umm, village mayor? What are we going to do.....” [Villager]

“Ah, I’m sorry. Then, first make groups of five people, excluding wood-workers and the blacksmith” [Shizuko]

“Understood” [Villagers]

Everyone was keenly aware that they were sharing the same fate- they did not make an unpleasant face when they were ordered by Shizuko, who was a woman. If they make a mistake, they will be dead, in a sense that is the ultimate threat. While reflecting on the situation, Shizuko decided on her future plan.

When she saw the three groups that were created in five minutes, Shizuko issued her

next order.

“Let’s use easy to understand names. From left will be the First group, Second group, and Third group. The craftsmen’s group will be called Fourth group. Please remember your own’s group name firmly” [Shizuko]

“Yes, we understand!” [Villagers]

Boys, men, and young men that could be seen in the first line responded well to the order.

“First of all, the First group will perform soil maintenance. Well, the only thing you will be doing is digging up the field’s soil. However, we will dig a bit deeper than usual. And for the Second group, you will gather wood. Because the Fourth group is created for the sake of creating the tools needed, they will be working together as a group. The Third group will be in charge of creating the compost. Speaking of that, please prepare a big bucket. And if you can, I want three buckets, but I don’t mind if there is only one” [Shizuko]

“Y, yes...” [Villagers]

“Yes~ let’s begin the preparation... Let’s start now!” [Shizuko]

“Y, yes!!” [Villagers]

First, Second, Third, and Fourth group proceeded to take care of their individual orders.

“Umm, what are we going to do.....” [Village Women]

While the men started doing their jobs, this time, the women timidly asked a question.

“Please prepare a wooden bucket. Then, please add soil to it. You can take the soil from anywhere. After that, prepare water to” [Shizuko]

“Y, yes” [Village Women]

The women also went to follow their orders. Shizuko thought that even if they were not able to understand most of the instructions, it would be fine for now.

Right now, I can't think of more [important things] other than that..... well, I also have to pick potato seedlings~



Thirty minutes later, the villagers who got the needed things gathered at the same place as before. Tree seedlings for planting, a jar filled water, three wooden buckets for making compost, a set of farming tools, and lumbering tools. Although it was a bit rugged, Shizuko thought that it was still useable.

“Right. First of all, let's start to do the work assigned to the women. But, what we are going to do is simple. First, open a hole in the ground and plant this.....” [Shizuko]

As she spoke, Shizuko buried sprouted potato seedlings in the ground. The villagers found such a sight rare, while they listened to what Shizuko said.

“Then, sprinkle it with water. Because it is for the seedlings, sprinkle it once a day is enough. After that, plant these in the place with enough sunlight. With this, the women's works are done. For the rest of it, please do it as usual” [Shizuko]

“Is it only this...?” [Women Villagers]

“Yes. Then, I leave it to you. Next is, First group's soil maintenance group. Let's go to the fields. For the rest of the groups, please stand by” [Shizuko]

Just like that, Shizuko went to the fields.

Chapter 3

Year 1565, During the First Ten Days of April

Several fields were spread out before my eyes. They weren't to the point that they could be called barren, but it seemed that the crops didn't thrive either.

(Four... or five fields, huh. However, soil maintenance is hard work, and it's impossible to sustain all of them at once. We have no choice but to truncate all but two large fields here.)

There were two areas that were close to the river, and the nutrients for the soil there didn't wash away due to rainfall. The best crops were most likely growing from those areas. That was why we (the village) barely avoided a situation where the meager harvest became a full-fledged famine. As far as I can see, it was roughly 1ha (100 meters per side, equalling about 10,000 square meters in total). It was more than large enough to cultivate sweet potatoes and pumpkins.

(The sweet corn will be placed in the field closest to the river, followed by the tomato; and for the pumpkins, they will be planted in the first field as well. For the last field, we'll plant the sweet potato there, with the sugarcane in the corner. For that reason, we need to dig up the soil.)

"Ahem... We will only use those two fields over there. We won't cultivate anything in the other fields this year." [Shizuko]

"Uh, there won't be enough crops..." [Villager]

"There is no problem. Soil maintenance is quite a demanding task. It is not realistic to do everything at once. More importantly, it's necessary to focus our manpower to secure the useable fields as soon as possible. So first of all, let's start with the soil that needs to be dug up." [Shizuko]

The villagers looked and gossiped with each other, but in the end, the villagers believed that they had no choice but to follow her order, and went to the assigned field while shouldering their farming tools.

(The results will appear, at the soonest, in two months.)

The land was barren, but it wasn't to the extent where it could be called a wasteland. However, the soil was weakened to the point where crops that are strong in many environments, excepting crops like sweet potatoes or pumpkins, wouldn't produce a good harvest. If we were in the modern era, we could buy compost and mulch, and use them for soil maintenance, but unfortunately; there was no choice like that in the Sengoku Era. So, we had to make it ourselves.

(They have rice straw, rice husks, rice bran; and cow manure isn't a problem... I want horse manure if possible... Ah, that's right!)

"Please wait a moment!" [Shizuko]

Shizuko who stumbled on a good idea, shouted to the second, third, and fourth groups, and began to run somewhere else.



Ten minutes later, Shizuko came back while grinning. Though all the group thought it was strange, it was too stupid to throw a retort to, and they let it pass.

"Well then, the third group will be in charge of making the compost. Please do your best with this important job!" [Shizuko]

"Compost...?" [Third Group]

Upon hearing an unfamiliar word, the third group inquired with strange faces.

"In short, this is like a fertilizer that comes from completely decomposed organic matter by microorganisms. There was a time when this was treated as the same as organic fertilizers, but they are completely different" [Shizuko]

"Instead of going to such lengths, why don't we just scatter the dung directly?" [Villagers]

"No, no. When the dung is in a state of fermentation, it produces gas. That's a hindrance to the growth of the roots, and in turn, it also attracts pests. Hasn't there been a time when the roots would rot and the pests were springing up excessively?"

[Shizuko]

“That is... well...” [Villagers]

“Compost is created from completely decomposed organic matter; hence, gas and pests won’t spring up. The supply of humus (a part of the soil) and the condition of the soil will improve, due to the supplies in the microorganisms. The pests will also be suppressed, and the soil will be more stable because of the increase in buffer capacity. To achieve that, making compost is a must. It takes at least half a year to properly make it, but even so, it is still necessary and there is a need to do it.” [Shizuko]

Explaining up to that point, Shizuko noticed that the villager’s faces were like a wrinkled rag. *(As expected, that explanation was too hard, huh.)* Shizuko finally realized too late, that she had failed in her explanation.

(Ah, knowledge of microorganisms, pets, and other such things are rather dubious. It’s unknown if that knowledge is in this era or not. However, if there is no compost, it will influence next year’s harvest yield... Somehow or other; I need to push the fact that compost needs to be made!)

“Uhm-” [Villager]

“Somehow, I don’t understand it, but; it seems that using our usual methods won’t work... I’ll follow your opinion.” [Villager]

When I tried to explain to them by words, the villagers were unexpectedly persuaded by it. No, I don’t think that they fully understood it, but because they decided to try it; I decided not to think about it too deeply. The proof for this was, they seemed that they didn’t understand the necessity of compost. Their reaction had more of the feeling of “Since I was told that I needed it.”

(Well, that is fine.)

The explanation for the second and fourth groups was easy. At any rate, their task was just to collect wood. Of course, it wouldn’t end with only collecting wood. Rather, their real job would come after that.

(Shovel and garden forks, without these things, then making compost will be extremely hard. After that, we have to make oblique fences to counteract wild boars, right~)

Wild boars were not really good at three- dimensional obstacles, and they can't pass through oblique fences. Since we were only worried about wild boards, it's possible to protect the fields by creating a wire mesh topped with spikes as a fence. We need to make it from wood since there's no metal here, but it's better than nothing.

(Everyday this month will be hard work... uh... I want to take a bath).

In this Sengoku period, it was impossible for commoners to enjoy a luxury like a bath, and they had to wipe the body down with water.

(It seems that this is a typical location for natural hot springs to appear... next time I'll try exploring that idea.)

Even though we can't afford to burn firewood and prepare hot water everyday, if there is a hot spring; we can get away with just pulling hot water out. If we can find one, then that's good. But if we can't find one, it's alright since we can understand the surrounding environment. After convincing herself like this, Shizuko also started working on her own tasks.

It has now been four days since Shizuko came to the village, the only things that were being done were making compost, mulch, and soil maintenance. At first, she thought that she didn't need much, but because they gathered so many fallen leaves unexpectedly, she decided to hurriedly make it. Making mulch was an easy task, you just put the leaves in a bucket and covered it with a suitably large stone. After that, you had to stir it once a day.

Although the shovel and the garden fork didn't have a beautiful shape like they did in the modern era, their function as a tool was satisfactory. The efficiency of making compost and the soil maintenance increased, and because of that, we finished it just a little earlier than we planned.

(The seedlings have grown quite well. I think that before long, we should plant in the edge of the field.)

The small seedlings were growing to the extent that it looked like they could jump out of the bucket these days. For the sake of mass production, we should not skip the preparation of the seedlings.

(There are still various things that could be done if we were in the modern period, but... Unfortunately, this is the Sengoku Period. You have no choice but to cut several processes,

right~)

“Well then, it’s time to transfer the seedlings which we planted in the wooden bucket to the field.” [Shizuko]

“Eeeh! Hey, we just dug up the soil!” [Villagers]

“That’s no problem. Because these crops have strong vitality, they can grow even in cracked land.

Sweet potatoes, pumpkins, and tomatoes could even grow in barren lands. Because they didn’t need delicate treatment, they played an active role in the past when famines hit. The Sweet Potatoes, in particular, had high nutrition, it was a kind of wonder food that could improve the situation.

“Well, if the village chief (Shizuko) says so...” [Villagers]

“Then, please bring a wooden bucket full of water to me.” [Shizuko]

While she asked them to bring a wooden bucket with water, Shizuko went to the field with a wooden shovel in hand. As was expected, the maintenance situation wasn’t stellar in these four days, nearly half of the land was still untouched. However, the main goal at the moment is to increase the number of seedlings we have, so it’s not a problem.

Is it good here...” [Shizuko]

While putting a mark on a corner of the field, Shizuko dug up the soil. By the way, it appeared, the soil was barren due to the topsoil being washed away by the rain. If however, we dig it up until we reach the place where the soil wasn’t washed away and mixed that with topsoil, it was enough for growing crops.

“Okay, like this is fine. And the next step is...” [Shizuko]

After she finished digging, Shizuko started to dig furrows. The truth was, you were supposed to furrow the ground about a week before planting crops, but there was no leeway timewise.

“Village mayor, we brought it... eh, what are you doing?” [Villagers]

“This? I’m making ridges you know.” [Shizuko]

Shizuko replied while pointed at the ridge that was 30cm to 40cm in height. The villagers didn’t really understand what was going on as usual, and they pulled a strange face at the sight of the piled up soil. But since we slept and ate together for four days, they would figure out what they needed to do immediately. In other words, “Since I don’t really get it, let’s stop thinking about it.”

“Eh, are we just making that today?” [Villagers]

“Two rows are fine for today. For now, best regards~. Ah, you can put the bucket down around there.” [Shizuko]

“Swell!” [Villagers]

The soil maintenance team put the bucket on the ground, and they began to plow with the farm tools they brought with their other hand. They made the ridges by looking at my example, but since they weren’t used to it, the shape was distorted.

“Well then, the seedling are... growing well. Four... no, there are five seedlings.” [Shizuko]

Because of the good weather, the potato seedlings were growing nicely. Originally, it has enough vitality to grow after a week in the shade.

“First of all, take it out of the bucket first... then plant it in the hole we opened up beforehand... there.” [Shizuko]

After taking out the seedling from the bucket of soil, we buried it in the hole prepared earlier. After filling in the hole with the remaining soil from the bucket, we watered the seedling with water from the second bucket. It wasn’t good if the water was too much, therefore, the stream of water was somewhat weak.

“Now, planting the next seedling”

After planting the first seedling, cut off the extended part of the seedling to make a new one. After immersing the freshly cut area in water, we plant this second seedling in a similar hole to the first. Because the seedlings aren’t very tall, we planted them on a slope and made small indents to store any excess water.

“With this, it’s over. After this, we will make ridges in preparation for next week, however... I think we finished almost everything we needed to for the moment.”
[Shizuko]

While watching the villagers make ridges a bit further from her, Shizuko washed her hands with the water in the wooden bucket.

It was decided that sweet potatoes would be the main crop, and Shizuko planned to mass-produce the seedlings until she reached the limit of what the soil could produce as crop. In return, the tomatoes, pumpkins, sweet corn, and sugarcane would have to be postponed. Ridge making would start late April, planting would start at the beginning of May, and the resulting harvest would be plenty enough.

(In this era, they relied heavily on imports for sugar. If it can be mass produced here, I believe it will become a considerable strength.)

However, there are not many sugarcane seedlings. Even if we were to plant them this year, they are likely to turn into new seedlings (rather than mature into the adult crop). Meaning that, the earliest we can start harvesting them will be in two years.

(Because I don’t know how to go home, I need to think about how I can live here...)

Since I came to the Sengoku Period by walking down the road, perhaps I can return by walking down the road again. I ended up taking a walk after thinking about it, but there is no sign that I will come back to the modern era. In the end, I gave up. I have no choice but to live through this for the time being, and I need to prepare for the worst. It’s also called a “practical” attitude.

(Sweet potatoes, tomatoes, pumpkins, sweet corn, and sugar canes. All of them (that I have) are the result of selective breeding in the modern era. Therefore, they have strong vitality and there are many edible parts that can be eaten; it’s to the point that they can’t be fairly compared with their predecessor crop from this time period. With this, Nobunaga has no choice but to become interested in these... well, the result will show around October.)

I thought about digging up a small portion of the crops, and bringing them to him; but he wouldn’t meet with me if I only did that. Instead, it would be more impactful to show him a mountain of sweet potatoes.

“Well then, how many sweet potatoes can we produce~?” [Shizuko]

Increasing the amount of seedlings every week until the end of June. It really is only that much, but because of this period, there are no machines; and all of the work is done manually.

(Since there is a river, it may be necessary to one day make a small waterwheel. Well, above all else...) “I miss bathing already...” [Shizuko]

While thinking of a steaming bath, Shizuko walked toward the village carrying a wooden bucket.

Chapter 4

Year 1565, Late April

Agriculture is a fight against the land. Shizuko remembered her grandfather saying such a thing before.

For the past three weeks since coming to the village, the main focus was maintaining the soil, which was hard labor.

However, because we steadily continued the field improvements, we were able to create a plot of land for the sweet corn, pumpkin, tomato, and sugar cane.

In addition, we stirred up the mountain of materials for the compost every week and the sweet potato seedlings we raised were planted in the field one after another.

Even in this situation, Shizuko who longed for a bath, and made a workgroup produce large amounts of plank-shaped wood. However, opportunities for success did not come themselves. Although this is a matter of course, Shizuko seemed to get frustrated.

While this was happening, she happened to stumble upon the cliff behind the previous village Mayor's home, and she noticed the cliffs were slightly wet. Curious, Shizuko investigated further and found that right above her height, about two meters high, there was a small hole in the cliff and from that hole, there was water leaking out.

At first, she believed it to be groundwater, but it was strangely warm to the touch. *No way*, she thought, so she took the time to accumulate the water; it was naturally hot water, in other words, a natural hot spring.

"Fu, fufu... It's a miracle. Thank you, God!"

She thought today was a lucky day, and hurriedly gathered the villagers and started working.

First, they leveled the ground to make a place to store the hot water. Then, to increase the amount of hot water flowing out of the hole, they readjusted the size of the holes

in the cliff. Looking at the hot water gathering little by little, Shizuko was so overwhelmed she could not put it into words.

However, it could not be used as it is. There is no point to hot water if it was dirty, so she decided to install a filter to clean the hot water.

Even though it was called a filter, it was a very simple one with rocks, charcoal, sand, and gravel mixed together. Although it was simple, it had excellent results. The hot water that was as black as coal at first gradually started to become cleaner.

Leading the clean water through a wooden pipe they made, it got sent towards the house. It is not so much a house as it is a facility specifically designed to use the hot water, in essence, a bathhouse.

Incidentally, the former Mayor's house was an obstacle to establishing the bathhouse but, Shizuko demolished it without any problems. Afterwards, Shizuko relayed the information. At that time, the face of the previous Mayor about to cry would be unforgettable, Shizuko thought.

And so, finally, a simple bath was created. It was rushed construction work but, thanks to the villagers who were frightened by Shizuko's extremely determined expression, they worked harder than usual and completed it.

"Ahhhh-, this is the best~..."

Having the bath to herself, fully enjoying the hot water she hadn't enjoyed in a long time. Of course, male and female bathing areas are separated. However, the villagers who didn't know what a bath was and furthermore didn't understand how to use it, didn't even try to approach it.

"Yeah, baths are the source of life-"

Although she didn't have shampoo nor conditioner, just taking a bath in the first place was bliss for Shizuko.

(It seems we can improve general hygiene and this is also not bad either~. We need to somehow procure a substitute for soap too... but, indeed, it's a real blessing to find a hot spring.)

Shizuko floated around with a careless expression. She didn't know yet. That this hot

spring will later become the cause for a ridiculous incident.



One month passed since she came to the village. The initial confusion and hesitation from that time flew away some time ago and now the villagers were all planting the sweet potato seedlings with familiar movements.

For the other crops; the tomato, pumpkin, sweet corn, and sugarcane seeds were already planted. Later they just needed to do the weeding, intertilling^[1], and hilling^[2] at some point and then they could harvest sometime in the summer.

She thought that the compost making and planting the sweet potato seedlings would be the villagers' main job so she started working on other jobs.

The first thing that Shizuko was concerned about was the drinking water. Currently, river water was being used but, she thought that she wanted to use a well if possible.

However, digging up a well is hard labor and on top of that, we need to find a place where the water rises. The hot spring was a product of a miracle, but to find a similarly convenient well would be unlikely.

(Well, let's take our time to find it)

Everything that had to be done within the first month is pretty much finished so, it's better to rest your body for now. Having thought that, Shizuko had only been doing the more relaxing work these days. Making ridges to plant the sweet potato seedlings in, taking out weeds, and mixing the compost ingredients while adding extra rice bran and straw to the mixture.

In terms of the compost, it was a big deal that we were able to procure horse manure. Unlike cattle manure, horse manure is an excellent material for compost. However, unlike cattle which has some uses to a farmer, horses were hardly grazed during the Sengoku Period.

That's why when Shizuko arrived in the village, she asked the person in charge of the horses to save the horse manure for her. Unexpectedly, her request was easily accepted and once a week, every week, it was delivered to the village.

(We'll use the compost during the winter and... when it's time to grow the crops next year I suppose.)

We'll do soil maintenance when the ground gets softer in the winter and a week before we plant the crop seeds and seedlings; that's twice. We'll plan on using the compost with that timing, is what Shizuko planned.

"Mayor~, we've finished planting the seedlings~"

"Oh, yes. Good work~"

While she was in the middle of her thoughts, the villagers who were doing soil maintenance and planting the seedlings returned. When looking up at the sky, the sun's positioning made it clear that it was still before noon. It can be said that their proficiency resulted in an improvement of their work efficiency.

"Planting for about eight percent of the field has been completed. At this rate, everything will be finished by next week."

"Oh my, there are a larger amount of seedlings here than expected."

"Oh, is that so. But that's still amazing. About a week ago, we harvested them as pretty much seedlings but, today, there are already buds popping up here and there.

"(That's because it would even grow on a soil where volcanic ash piled up.) It can't be helped. We didn't plan for this but let's expand the size of the fields. It never hurts to have a larger harvest."

"Understood. Then we'll start digging up the field in that area."

"Please do~"

With a cheerful smile, the villages carried their tools in one hand while heading to the field. As expected, when you see results on the fields (although it's only just a few buds), you feel pretty good.

"Fuu... I guess I'll fulfill today's quota and then take a bath."

After wiping the sweat off of her forehead, Shizuko resumed her work.

(There was a time when I thought “I finished my work today too, so I’m gonna fully enjoy my hot bath!”)

Shizuko tried to escape from reality and yet, she was disappointed that her wish didn’t come true. However, Shizuko’s senses reluctantly brought her back to reality by the intimidating figure in front of her.

“What’s wrong? Weren’t you going to surprise me?”

There is a man around 30 with a broad grin plastered on his face. He was Oda Nobunaga, who was the one acting as Shizuko’s guardian.

“I’m very sorry for getting carried away too much. Please have a mercy-!”

Shizuko went to kneel on the ground perfectly and kept begging for his mercy while shivering. Although Nobunaga could hardly hear it due to her taking too fast.

“It’s not like I’m angry or anything. I just wanted to see the results that you said with your big mouth.”

(That means you are angry, right!?) “I-I’m really sorry”

It was just a slip of the tongue. But because the work was going better than expected, I relaxed a bit too much.

While looking at the fields from higher ground I thought, “If we continue at this rate and expand our fields out, our poor food situation will be completely reversed and Oda-sama would have to reconsider my village, right?! What if we all of a sudden become an important region or something?” and accidentally blurted it out.

Usually, it would’ve just been a harmless mumbling to oneself but, regrettably, Nobunaga himself caught wind of the speech. Shizuko thought to herself that she really needed to confirm her surroundings before speaking to herself.

“...Well, that’s fine. So, where is this so-called hot spring?”

“Ha? Hot spring?”

Shizuko couldn’t reply in an affirmative when a topic about the hot spring was brought suddenly.

“What... From the report of it, I heard that you found and dug a hot spring...?”

“Umm, yes. Certainly, I found a hot spring but...?”

Shizuko who gradually have a bad feeling guessed Nobunaga's next words. She thought 'Honestly, give me a break.'

“I also wanted to know what this so-called hot spring was like you see. And that is why you need to guide me to a hot spring.”

But the reality was cruel.



It is said that people such as Takeda Shingen and Uesugi Kenshin in the Sengoku Era kept their eye on the efficacy of hot springs. However, if you asked whether or not Oda Nobunaga were the same as them, the correct answer would be “I'm not sure”. And wanting to experience a hot spring is the same thing as saying you've never seen a hot spring before. In other words, Oda Nobunaga has no knowledge of a hot spring. That's why he is having Shizuko guide him. That means that-

(At this rate, this will be a mixed bathing, right-!)

It means that we will take a bath together.

In the first place, Nobunaga came to the village was because of Shizuko's report of finding a hot spring to Mori Yoshinari. Mori Yoshinari who didn't know what a hot spring was, without writing any extra personal views, sent a report as is.

If it was normal, it would be ended up in doubt, but the person called Nobunaga was awfully brimming with curiosity. Rather than doubting it, it can be called that he wants to experience it by himself.

“What are you doing? Hurry up!”

“R- Right away-!!”

Shizuko, who was frightened by Nobunaga's raised voice, prepared herself and guided Nobunaga to the bathing area. They were originally near the bathing area so there was no need to walk that much. They arrived at their destination in only five minutes.

“Wow... what a small area”

“(Compared to what?) Umm, the left side is for men and the right side for women if we looking from the front. The reason why the hot spring is separated by gender is the manner when entering-”

“Such manner or custom is trivial. Show it to me quickly”

“(Nonono! Please wait a moment!?) Even if you say that, going together with the likes of me, your retainers won’t allow it...”

There was no such a vulgar feeling coming from Nobunaga himself about the mixed bath. Because he didn’t know about what is a hot spring in the first place. Even if he was to start talking about a mixed bathing, he has the authority to let it slide. There was less and less choice because of Shizuko was under Nobunaga’s protection.

“Don’t mind it. Even if you try to kill me, I’m not so soft as to fall behind women and children.”

“(That’s right~) Th-then please come inside”

Shizuko opened the door of the bathroom while thinking ‘Someday, he will be killed by his own men’.

The items prepared by Shizuko were a bathing chair, a one-handed pail, a wooden hot-water basin, a substitute for soap – a powder made from the fruit of the washnut^[3], a bamboo basket to put your kimono in, and a yukata to wear in the bath.

Actually, washnut is a natural surfactant which contains a large amount of saponin^[4]. If you dry the fruit and make it into a powder, it can be fully used as a substitute for a soap. Also, saponin is poisonous for a living being, therefore, birds and insects aren’t eating it.

For that reason, a complete natural cultivation without using any pesticide and fertilizer can be done, furthermore, there’s no need to harvest them quickly. In Japan’s climate, excluding especially cold places such as Niigata, they often grow in wet mountainous regions with lots of sunshine.

(I'm glad I remembered, environmental friendly knowledge)

In a nature-type magazine, Shizuko was remembering reading about how if you dried and ground up the washnut into a powder, it would become a natural soap.

However, there were only a few washnuts that Shizuko could get her hands on, and had to put up with the tiny amount from this harvest.

Because the original harvest time period is from November, even if it's a small amount, it's great to get any in your hands around this time in the beginning of spring.

(Well, I have no choice but to put up with it. We'll harvest a lot this year-!?)

As Shizuko was getting herself fired up, she went into the men's side accompanied by Nobunaga.

But she completely forgot something. In the first place, in the Sengoku era, there is no type of bath that covers your entire body with water.

The normal bath style is one that is like a steaming bath, in essence, a sauna type of style. But this can only be done if you are a high ranking officer, in other words, someone of national ranking like Oda Nobunaga.

By chance, we were able to find a natural hot spring but normally, it is an extremely luxurious facility that would need a lot of firewood prepared beforehand that takes a lot of time and effort.

Therefore, she made a bathtub, the type where it was filled with hot water "Onsen"(Hot spring). Though even if she says that, Nobunaga wouldn't know about it.

However, even that was still good. The reason why is because the bathing situation for farmers and lower class officers were even more miserable.

Preparing a sauna was a dream within a dream and "outdoor bathing" was a common bathing situation. The type of bath where you'd fill a tub up with hot water hasn't spread in the Edo period yet. However, in this Edo, how many days is it normal to not take a bath in the rural areas?

It is said that Takeda Shingen and Uesugi Kenshin had bathing areas that were referred to as hidden hot springs but, that was also only reserved for quite a limited amount of

people, aides, and special guests.

In other words, this sort of facility, where Shizuko is using water that is heated by an unknown heat source (because they can't survey it) and built a facility with a large public bath that anyone can use, is completely impossible to imagine in this time period.

"Ho..."

At the center of a room where there was a little bit of steam accumulated, there was a bathtub large enough to easily fit five people. Nobunaga stared down and let out a breath of admiration.

Notes:

1. Intertilling is when you cultivate between the rows of a crop. You do this to prevent weeds from popping up. It also aerates the soil which stimulates crop root growth while conserving soil moisture and providing insulation from the sun.
2. Hilling, also known as earthing up or ridging. It's when you put some soil up around the base of the plant (usually for potatoes) to promote growth along the stem as well as protect the potatoes from being exposed to light (they produce the toxin solanine and become inedible when exposed to light).
3. Also known as the Indian Soapberry or in Japanese it's called mukuroji. Can also be called a soapnut. [Wiki link](#).
4. Saponins are a class of chemical compounds, one of many secondary metabolites found in natural sources, with saponins found in particular abundance in various plant species. More specifically, they are amphipathic glycosides grouped, in terms of phenomenology, by the soap-like foaming they produce when shaken in aqueous solutions, and, in terms of structure, by their composition of one or more hydrophilic glycoside moieties combined with a lipophilic triterpene derivative.

Chapter 5

Year 1565, Early May

“What a paradise.”

Nobunaga relaxed in hot water up to his shoulders, he felt the stiffness melt away from his body, enjoying the hot spring.

However, Shizuko fell to the floor silently due to exhaustion.

(So- so tired... to think I would wash his whole body...)

Being astonished from seeing all of the hot water in the large bath, Nobunaga immediately took off his clothing and tried to enter it.

Entering the tub without washing your body first will make the water filthy.

That’s why I felt it was important to convince Nobunaga who was mid-entering the tub while naked, the importance of washing your body.

Surprisingly, Nobunaga accepted it easily, sitting down in a bath chair that Shizuko prepared.

Shizuko was shaken for a moment, before getting herself together and putting Nobunaga’s clothing in a basket.

She then washed Nobunaga’s head, face, and body in that order.

(But... even though he only has a hobby to train, he has a crazy body.)

From a modern person’s perspective, like Shizuko, Nobunaga seemed to train almost too much, so much so that his whole body seemed like a mass of muscle.

(They did say that his house was immaculately clean if I recall... his body wasn’t that dirty either. I wonder if Nobunaga is the type of person who likes to keep things clean.)

“This is a good opportunity... there are things I wanted to ask you.”

“(There is also a story saying that he likes Sumo, it’s no wonder he is so well built.) Oh, yes. What is it?”

While she was thinking, Nobunaga suddenly spoke to her.

Shizuko was a little surprised at the sudden event but, Nobunaga did not seem to mind as he spoke quietly with an intense expression.

“Shall I finally make you reveal exactly who you are?”

“...Uhhmm, the right to remain silent... you don’t have that, do you...?”

“If you refuse, then we will have no choice. We will have to dispose of you.”

To Shizuko’s fearfully asked question, Nobunaga did not give a moment’s hesitation before his reply.

Shizuko immediately fell into a panic after his threat, she knew he wasn’t joking.

“(Wh- What should I do?! If I told him that I came from the future, he’ll just think I’m crazy... for now let’s go with Nanban^[1]! I’ll just say I’m from Nanban!) Na- Nanban! Yes, I came from Nanban!”

“Hmm, I see. How old were you when you left Nanban?”

“Uh, uhhh... Thirteen years old...?”

The moment Shizuko panicked and gave her response, Nobunaga’s eyes became slightly narrower.

The fact that Nobunaga was weary of Shizuko could be understood from his demeanor even without him saying a word.

Although Shizuko wanted to make up some kind of a reason, she had no way to prove what she was saying.

She knew she would just be digging her own grave. That’s why she had no reason but to stay silent.

“...Well, that’s fine. No matter where you came from, as long as you are benefitting me, that is all that is needed. As I have said since the beginning, the moment you leave my service is the moment you perish.”

“Y-, yes. (It sounds like he’s saying he’ll kill me if I betray him.)”

Shizuko’s imagination was correct. Although those were the words he said when they first met, her brain was not able to grasp the meaning at that time.

“Show me your aptitude. That is what you must do.”

“U- Understood.”

“This conversation is over. However, this thing called a hot spring is marvelous. I will think about whether or not we can use it as a reward.”

“Yes, you really do say things that are similar to Takeda Tarou Harunobu.^[2]”

Shizuko spoke carelessly in a loud voice while putting away the bathing tools.

“...Did you say... Takeda Tarou Harunobu...?”

Although it was quiet, Nobunaga asked with a voice that seemed to have bloodlust behind it.

“That’s right. That person, who went on and on about a “hidden spring”, was developing a hot spring resort. He was making it for his subordinates to enter, so it kinda gives off a similar feeling... Ah, his name is Takeda Tokueiken Shingen right now. He changed his name a little before entering priesthood...?”

The more Shizuko spoke, the more blue veins appeared on Nobunaga’s forehead. Shizuko was talking with her back turned to Nobunaga while tidying the bathing tools; she didn’t know the importance and danger of the information she was talking about. Maybe it was because of piled fatigue that dulled her sense of danger.

“Shut up...”

Though, sensing danger right now was too late.

“Yes? Just now, what did... you say?”

Shizuko stood up while holding a wooden bucket and stool as she casually turned to face Nobunaga. In an instant, he knocked away the wooden bucket and stool from her hand. *clang-clang* A dry sound echoed in the room. However, Shizuko's mind had no room to care about that, for Nobunaga was looking at her with an air of pure bloodlust. It was impossible to have any leeway.

"You, are you Takeda's secret agent?"

Shizuko vigorously shook her head at that question.

"Then, are you Shogun's secret agent?"

She shook her head at the second question too.

"...Nanban's secret agent?"

Shizuko shook her head at whatever he said. In the first place, if she was mistaken as a secret agent (it was called spy in modern times), she would be exiled at best. Thinking about it normally, it would end up in an execution.

(Which reminds me, Takeda's hidden hot spring counts as confidential information in this era!)

In Shizuko's era, information about Takeda Shingen could be easily searched. However, in Sengoku era, someone's had to put their life on the line to even find out about a person's whereabouts. So, if there was someone like Shizuko who could talk about a top secret unreservedly, it couldn't be helped that she was deemed as a suspicious person.

"Well that's fine, I'm a man who keeps his promise. I won't cut you down as long as you don't betray me."

"Ha, haha..."

There was nothing to do but laugh right now. Shizuko couldn't help but let out a dry laugh with a cramped face.

"However, I have something to ask right now. You, prepare to depart for the castle right now."

“Huh...?”

“We are going back to the castle right now.”

Nobunaga matter-of-factly informed Shizuru, whose face had frozen into a foolish expression.

Looks like Nobunaga resided in a castle from the beginning of the Sengoku Era. Shizuko's thought derailed in preparation to escape reality since she was in a place that could cause her to have a stomachache.

(I feel like the stress is making a hole in my stomach...)

Shizuko stole a glance to her left side. Oda Nobunaga's vassals were lined up. Apart from Mori Yoshinari, everyone directed a doubtful gaze at Shizuko, and their faces blatantly showed that they were like looking at a suspicious person. It was natural. There was a sudden summon from their lord, and they saw a woman standing alone when they came. There was no reason to be suspicious of Shizuko.

“...Raise your head.”

“(Ah, My legs are numb...) Yes.”

Shizuko who was released from dogeza looked at Nobunaga's face just like Nobunaga ordered her to. Nobunaga gave a harsh stare and blue vein almost popped out, but it was only for a moment. She unintentionally averted her eyes, but everyone who looked would avert their eyes for sure. As a proof, all of the servants slightly averted their eyes from that subtle expression.

“Shizuko, tell me about Takeda Tokueiken Shingen.”

“Yes?”

She tilted her head at the sudden question. Shizuko thought back about upon Takeda Shingen. If it was about Takeda Shingen, she only knew about his name. However, Shizuko loved history, geography, and agriculture. As one would expect from someone who couldn't read old scrolls, she had read most of the historical materials. Her favorite was from the latest Muromachi Era to Edo Era, and she completely remembered the majority of the historical events that happened in between those eras.

“Yes! Takeda Tokueiken Shingen, governor of Kai Province, 19th generation head of Takeda Clan. His real name is Harunobu and his alias is Tarou. He got Buddhist last name after entering the priesthood and called himself Tokueiken Shingen.”

It could be seen that Shizuko readily spoke about Takeda Shingen, Mori Yoshinari was the first person whose face had become stiff. However, Shizuko who really loved history for a long time was really happy in her heart. That was why she didn't notice the servants' expressions at all. Rather, she entered her own world halfway into the story.

“He had many repeated disputes with Echigo Province's Governor, Nagao Kagetora (later called Uesugi Kenshin), subjugating Shinano before expanding his territory. At the same time, he energetically stimulated domestic affairs by proactively taking in digging crafts and refining techniques from Nanban's Articles for the economy to produce a vast amount of gold. And that gold would be used in the gold standard system and in preparation to mint Koshu Gold (Goishi Gold^[3]). And that would become Japan's first gold coin. He is famous for devising a plan for the flood prevention project as well as military expansion from the assets gained from the circulating currency.”

(We know nothing about that!)

“Shingen himself became the leader in the flood prevention project. He often successfully defended against disastrous floods. In order to do that he created a river bank called Shingen Tsutsumi at Kofu Basin.

“...That's enough.”

Nobunaga who didn't say yes or no after being impressed quietly opened his mouth. He felt frustrated that he couldn't stop his own order to Shizuko, that thought vanished however when he saw her just now. Since it would only invalidate her story if he said unnecessary things.

“...”

Nobunaga quietly closed his eyes and produced a kind of rhythm from his folding fan.*tonton tonton* Only light sounds could be heard.

“...Kill.”

Shizuko broke out in a cold sweat at that very moment.

“Though I want to say that, I haven’t seen the results of your agricultural land reform yet. I will think about it based on that result.”

“...(sigh)”

Shizuko let out a sigh of relief once he decided to not kill her yet. However, the decision just a moment ago was only postponed. It wouldn’t change the fact that she would be killed if she failed.

“Pardon me my lord but this person is too dangerous. The one my lord might take may be a secret agent.”

One of the servants made an interjection when Shizuko patted her chest out of relief.

“Saru, does this person look like a secret agent? She looks like a stupid little girl to me.”

The one who called Saru glared at Shizuko.

(Saru... Do you mean Toyotomi Hideyoshi!?)

“...Certainly, this person doesn’t look like a secret agent. If she is, then a girl from the town can be a secret agent.”

“I’m not even an Onee-chan, much less a spy...”

“Ha? Supai^[4]?”

“(Oops, slip of the tongue) Pardon me, there is nothing wrong.”

I have to refrain talking about unnecessary things. Having thought so, Shizuko decided to stay silent.

(This era is this era. There is nothing like proof of a person’s identity. Unnecessary remarks only invite dangers.)

Shizuko’s knowledge came from the future where it already was considered to be educational material. The people from Sengoku Era didn’t know the importance of “real-time”. Seeing that she didn’t know what might be confidential information, or where spies might be hiding, it was best for her to be tight-lipped.

“That’s fine. Whoever this person may be, her knowledge is hard to come by in many places.”

“Yes...”

Hideyoshi kept arguing vehemently, however, he backed down with a disgruntled expression when he heard Nobunaga’s remark. The other servants have the same expression as well but it was only Mori Yoshinari who directed a worried look towards Shizuko.

“Ah, that’s right. I have a gift for my lord.”

Although she got a prickling gaze, she recalled something.

Notes

1. Nanban, also known as Nanman was originally referring to people in south and southeast Asia.
2. However, in Japan, the word began to take the meaning of the Portuguese who arrived in the 1500s.
3. More info can be read: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nanban_trade
4. This is referring to Takeda Shingen. He was originally called Tarou (eldest son) during his childhood, but when he came of age, he was given the formal name Harunobu.
5. Goshi Gold
6. It gets lost in translation but she uses the English word “spy” which Nobunaga doesn’t know the meaning of so he’s just repeating it phonetically.

Chapter 6

Year 1565, Middle of May

“Hmm...”

With a face ready to try something, Nobunaga muttered while lightly striking his hand. The entrance was opened. From there, a page walked in, put some offerings on the Obon tray, and came before Nobunaga... The moment Nobunaga saw that he raised an eyebrow.

“What is that...? I have never seen such an article before”

The surrounding military chiefs became rowdy when they saw the offering. That was because the supposed offering was an article never before seen.

(I'm glad that I brought an atlas of Japan with me)

What Shizuko gave as an offering was an atlas that was sold normally in modern times. Moreover, the atlas which Shizuko brought this time was the thick version of it used by experts.

Although primary industries such as agriculture were essentially Shizuko's forte, she also had other hobbies as well. Those were history and geography. If she had free time, she would spend it being absorbed in reading historical and geographical books. That was the reason why Shizuko was familiar with the history and usually, she kept the world and Japan maps in her bag. The day she time slipped into the Sengoku Period, she luckily put in an atlas of Japan in her bag.

(In the Edo Period, maps were considered national level confidential items thus it was forbidden to take one out. All the more so they were treated as precious documents in the Sengoku Period. The river's flow may have been changed because of the flood control but distance and direction were supposed to be the same)

“Shizuko, what is this? Explain quickly”

Nobunaga inquired while pointing at the Japanese atlas with his folding fan. He

seemed like subtly keeping it at arm's length but his strong curiosity came out after that. Shizuko bowed once and moved before Nobunaga. The Japanese atlas was in between them.

"I will gladly explain it"

As she said so, Shizuko opened the atlas.



Nobunaga watched Shizuko open the book with great interest. There was no bookbinding technology in Sengoku Period, the finest book was washi(Japanese paper) bound with string. Scrolls and wooden pieces were the norms. It was never heard that there was a book bound with glue paste. But what surprised Nobunaga the most was that it was a color printed book. A colorful paper that he never saw before was enough to stimulate his curiosity.

(This map should be equivalent to salt if we had to buy it...)

She didn't realize such thinking. The act of making Nobunaga believe that she was indispensable to him gave birth to a small ripple that would cause a huge course of events in the history. It was only a small ripple, but even then, it would create a huge wave and spread.



Two months had passed since Shizuko came to the village. Seasons had changed from spring to summer, and sunny days continued every day at this time. That meant it was enough only pulling out the weeds and sprinkling the water moderately. Although it was a time to relax, Shizuko breathed a heavy sigh and dropped her shoulders. That was a problem coming to light.

"Haaa... What kind of pest control measures will I make..."

That problem was pest control. Some areas were seriously damaged even in the modern era. The amount of damages would amount to tens of millions of yen and most of the crops couldn't be harvested, but the biggest problem was that the farmer's motivation went down. Decreased farmer's motivation to cultivate in this Sengoku Period would be a life and death situation.

“What method is most effective...”

Currently, the damage wasn't so serious, but it was inevitable that the danger level rose over the summer. Even if you grew a large quantity of crops, it would be meaningless if all of them were eaten by the pests.

“Osora-san, Tagosaku-san, please tell me what you know about pests”

Shizuko called out to the nearby villagers who were pulling out the weeds, the woman named Osora and the man named Tagosaku. The man seemed to be frantically pulling out the weeds but the woman noticed Shizuko's voice.

“Well if I had to say anything, there are a lot of deer in the area. There used to be foxes and weasels in the area as well but... It could be because there are too many deer, we don't see them often anymore. Well, we still see some wild boars here and there...”

“Hmm, deer huh...”

Basically, the pests were deer, wild boar, fox, and weasels for the farmer at this time. The most terrible of them was the deer. It has troublesome nature in that it had high fertility and became nocturnal during the hunting period. It was always ranked first for doing damage to the crops.

(There was almost no damage by other animals from what they told me... or maybe, because the deer dominated the whole area made it harder for other animals to live there?)

The fact that there were no foxes or weasels made it easier since there was no need to devise new measures but it all depended on whether or not the villager could catch the deer.

(It required a troublesome procedure for disposing of a deer in the modern era but it is an important protein source in this period. If we can catch in a large amount and make dried meat out of it, we may survive starvation)

Sweet potatoes were ready to harvest the earliest at the end of September, but by that time, there was a need to find a way to surpass the bare livelihood. Since Shizuko had the benefit of being Mori Yoshinari's subordinate, she regularly received food but the villagers weren't included. If the deer could be caught in a large quantity, it could be used as food for the villagers.

(We can secure enough food if we harvest sweet potatoes. Until then, to secure enough food, we need to get our hands on deer and boar meat... but the problem is how to do it, right.....)

On top of that, it was hard to get a hunting rifle in this era, the gun itself was an expensive thing (about 500,000 yen at the modern price). Above all, gunpowder was a valuable item in this era, so hunting deer with a gun wasn't realistic.

(We can't get natural Niter ^[1] in Japan... huh? Wait a moment...)

At that time, something was stuck in Shizuko's mind. As soon as she ran through her memory, she remembered some important information.

(Umm... about the material, Mori-sama will buy it for me if I ask it, however... I can't say it flatly, right~. It will take several months to prepare various arrangements and to lay the groundwork. But if I ask him on the pretext of guarding me, there will be less trouble and I'll try it just in case. Well, that is that and this is this... I can't think of any better plan to deal with deer)

Another idea came to Shizuko when her mind went astray but she couldn't come up with any measures to deal with the pests.

(Deer increased in large quantity because of there was no carnivore as it's natural enemy. If that's the case then by taming wolves...? No, that won't do. The places they can live were limited and above all, it was too much for a long-term measure)

Deer and wild boars increased in large quantities in the modern era because it's natural enemy, Japanese wolves, went extinct. But there was a chance that they were still alive in Sengoku Period. Because there was a record from Philipp Franz Balthasar von Siebold noting that both the Honshu wolf and Hokkaido wolf had been raised in Edo period.

(Then, let's set up traps quickly, however... creating a net-like an anti-bird net^[2] is really hard...)

The net seemed to be full of openings when you took a glance overhead. The farm was completely covered with a simple net made of straw as a countermeasure for dealing with birds and pests. It took almost a month to create it, but it prevented most damage from birds thanks to it.

(Rather, I should make a path like a gate to... guide...!?)

At that moment, Shizuko recalled the conversation with her grandfather about how to deal with deer. Her grandfather talked about important information which was a knowledge that had enough use even in this Sengoku Period.

“Ah, that’s right... should we make a path that a deer, an Artiodactyla or other hoofed animals, can never pass!”

“Uwah, you surprised me!”

Tagosaku was surprised by the sudden screaming Shizuko. Osora wasn’t surprised since she wasn’t near enough but, as expected, the Shizuko who suddenly screamed was surprising enough.

“(Hey Osora-san, did village head thinking of something very strange again?)”

When Tagosaku moved to Osora near enough, he talked with a voice so low that it was almost like a whisper.

“(I don’t think so. But, village head is really knowledgeable~. Even with only that information, she can think up an idea)”

“(Certainly... I didn’t get it at first but, I understood the purpose after doing it myself)”

“(From the looks of it, it looks likely that she has thought up an idea to deal with the deer one way or another? Well, in the end, it looks like that we will be worked hard. It’s really awful, right~)”

“(That’s right...)”

The two who watched Shizuko sitting on the ground and writing something felt like they heard the construction group screaming. And their hunch came true later on.

Around a week after Shizuko came up with something, there was a strange mechanism placed fully around the farm. The villagers didn’t know what was this for since they weren’t given the detailed explanation yet. But, since they got a good result from doing what Shizuko told them to, they felt that it would work out somehow...

“Mmhm, it’s perfect. The bear trap and the texas gate^[3] are ready”

The Shizuko who carried a rod-like thing on her shoulder seemed satisfied as she watched the mechanism in front of her. She thought that it was quite good for a rushed construction. But it was only for this year since it was decided that there would be expansions for the farms.

“Bear traps are normally illegal in modern Japan but we can use it with no problem in this period right~”

Shizuko swung the rod as she said so. It was a cracked rod that was about a meter in length. At the tip of the rod, there was an area to cradle a rock which was attached to the rod by a string on both ends. However, at the top end, the string was not fully attached. It could be used to snare from the look of it. ^[4]

“We get a long-range attack with this staff sling. Although you can just use a sling, this one has an increased range and power so using this is better. It can be a makeshift spear if the worst came to worst”

A staff sling. The total length was around a meter with a weight of around 300 to 500 grams and its range was around 100 to 150 meters. It was a weapon used from the fourth century BCE to modern era that boasted having a range no less than a bow. On the other hand, the con was that it had a low fire rate and it took a long time to throw.

Furthermore, Shizuko placed a bit pointed instrument made from iron at the butt-end of the staff sling. This stabilized the center of gravity and protected the handle when it was stabbed to the ground. It wasn't as sharp as a blade but still had a striking power that it wouldn't only end with a slight pain if it was thrust.

“Umm, Village chief. We don't know whatever you are talking about but what should we do from now on...?”

“Ssh, I'll show you the result of the traps”

“Haah...”

Shizuko and several villagers hid themselves in the bushes downwind from the farm. Everyone but Shizuko had no idea as to why they are hiding or the trap's purpose.

(An eye-witness is not inferior to many hearsays... For this kind of thing, it is faster to see it than to hear the explanations)

Around thirty minutes after thinking that, the deer showed up. It seemed that they were individuals that descended from the mountain, and the number was about nine.

“Three... four... it seems that the biggest one is the male and the rest of it is female:

“It’s quite the number...”

The villagers were slightly frightened as they had never seen such numbers before. I wonder if the herd still had the instinct to fear humans if the humans were like this. While Shizuko thought like that, a deer approach the texas gate.

“Oh, a little bit more... hey guys, that is the trap’s purpose”

The deer went straight toward the texas gate. However, after a few steps, it couldn’t move completely. The deer raised a cry as it couldn’t move as it wished

“Oh—”

The villagers raised a sigh of admiration. The deer caught between the texas gate couldn’t move forward nor backward. On top of that, the trapped deer became an obstacle to the herd.

“We got a source of protein~! Well then, I wonder if it’s the bear traps next”

At the moment she muttered that, a deer’s cry resounded. As it was too loud, the other deer were running away to their original place up in the mountain. From the look of it, there was a deer that got trapped in the bear trap.

“Two of them, huh... not really bad.”

Shizuko muttered that when she looked at the result.

Footnotes:

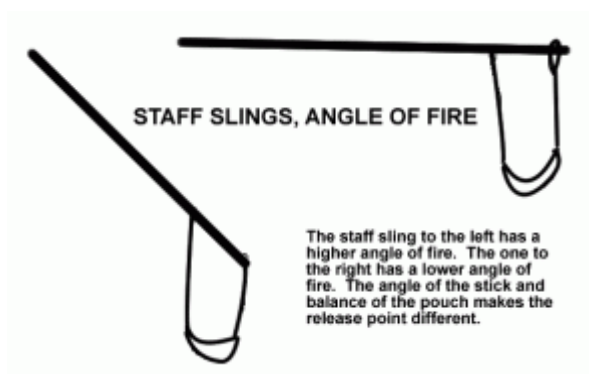
1. Niter, a potassium nitrate(KNO_3) or commonly known as saltpeter, one of the main ingredients for making gunpowder.
2. This one.



3. This.



4. This one.



Chapter 7

Year 1565, Middle of May

Shizuko thought that it would be fine even if one of the deer were captured alive. The deer would start to produce a smell peculiar to meat if one didn't process it quickly. The deer which got stuck at the Texas gate was unharmed but the one that was trapped by the bear trap had hurt its leg. It was obvious which one should be processed first.

"We will be processing the one caught by the trap first. Can you do the processing that I tell you beforehand?"

"There is no problem, village chief."

The villagers nodded simultaneously at Shizuko's query. Shizuko loaded a stone to her staff sling.

"Well then, let's go."

With that signal, Shizuko stood up and jumped out from the hiding bush. The deer noticed Shizuko and company and tried to escape but it couldn't move anywhere.

"Let it hit, please... ei!"

Shizuko's shot was aimed at the back of the struggling deer head. The stone drew a beautiful arc and hit the back of its head. The deer, which suffered a shock to its brain because of the damage, fell to the ground as it staggered. She looked at its condition for a bit to make sure that it wouldn't rise up again but the deer had completely fainted.

"Tie the deer from its hind legs! When you are done, undo the trap and restrain its forefeet."

"Got it!"

Since the deer hadn't died yet, it wasn't known when it would get up. It would be very dangerous if the deer regained its consciousness and struggled around when being transported. However, the villagers who weren't used to doing this took some time to

bind the deer's legs.

"Well then, let's bring it to the slaughterhouse."

Luckily, they were able to tie both their legs before the deer woke up. After that, they carried the deer to the hanging place built around the river to drain its blood. Now, there won't be any rampages since there will be low blood pressure as we drained its blood.

Since the river was near the farm, it didn't take long to reach it. The villagers set up the deer they carried in the hanging place.

"Well then, I will dismantle it so please wait here for a moment."

"Eh, can village chief really dismantle it?"

"Hmm, I watched my grandfather do it a long time ago, and I actually did it once or twice."

While saying so, Shizuko prepared the knives for dismantling purposes. It was a set of knives for dismantling wild games which were a gift for her 14th birthday from her grandfather. In modern Japan, there are various sized knives ranging from a small knife for dismantling joints, to long sized knives which violated the Sword and Firearms Law.

There was a time where Shizuko wanted to retort to giving a high schooler girl a set of knives for hunting wild games as a present but she came to like it. She received guidance about dismantling wild games such as deer and wild boar from her grandfather's friend who belonged to a hunting club. Although she was only a teenager, Shizuko was quite the expert at dismantling wild games.

With a knife for dismantling, Shizuko cut its neck. The blood pressure from the brain would decrease if the carotid artery was cut. The deer would lose its consciousness for a moment but its heart would still beat and the blood from capillary vessel could be drawn because of that. You could drain blood without putting unnecessary stress on the deer.

(...there would be people who would make irresponsible remarks like "killing the deer is pathetic" if it wasn't the Sengoku period)

In modern times, most people don't know how beef and pork are processed. That was why they could make irresponsible remarks such as "pitiful" and "cruel" when they looked at the scene of killing wild game. However, Shizuko who was educated by his grandfather thought that that remark was no less than hypocrisy.

(To be alive means that we have to take away another life. To eat things means that we have to eat another life. To stay alive too, it is necessary to kill, that is the principle of life. Thinking about something like "pitiful" and "cruel" is useless when looking at the slaughterhouse... that's what I think. Truly, I realized it only after having a hard time looking for something to eat, grandpa.)

Shizuko thought so as she looked at the blood dripping down from the chin. Process every part from the head to the bottom without waste, take everything and leave nothing behind. She thought that it would be kind of like holding a service for the deer.

"The blood draining will be finished soon. Let's start the process of removing the intestines. Bring two wooden buckets, please. Fill one of them with water from the river and leave the other one as is."

"Got it—!"

Shizuko asked the villagers to prepare two wooden buckets so that she could separate the liver from the other organs. If one asked for the reason, it was due to the vitamins which helped bolster blood. If processed correctly, you could eat it by grilling it with a sprinkle of salt. However, the other organs may have bacteria. Which is why they would be put in the other bucket and would be used as a material for composting.

"We just finished filling the wooden bucket with water!"

"Thank you."

After she finished getting rid of the inedible organs, she put them in the empty wooden bucket. After taking out the liver from those organs, she cleaned the knife with the water from the wooden bucket.

"Put down the deer and wash it with water from the river. Submerge it in the water by holding it downward."

"Ehh~"

After asking the villagers to do the last blood draining process, Shizuko pelts off the skin on the liver and drew the blood further. In a sense, the liver was different from smoked meat as it had to be eaten quickly or it would rot.

(If we don't deal with the matter of food quickly... For the time being, I should wash my hands and skin the deer afterward.)



After submerging the first one in the river's water, the second one also went through the same process. Then, they were submerged in the water for two to three hours, and soon the blood draining and low-temperature treatment was carried out.

While waiting for that process to finish, Shizuko ate the liver after sprinkling it with salt and grilling it. In this era, two meals a day is the norm, Shizuko didn't have a habit of eating lunch but since there was no cold storage for food so she ate the liver. Hence, eating the liver was treated similarly to eating snacks. The villagers were perplexed at first but after knowing that it was delicious, they competed over it.

"Hang it upwards this time."

Shizuko thought that it was the time to take the deer out from the river.

"Yes~"

While returning a lively reply to Shizuko's order, the villagers hung the deer from the head again. After washing her hand and the knife, Shizuko would start dismantling the skin and the meat next.

(I will start from the hind legs after I finish skinning the deer.)

Shizuko would dismantle the hind legs after skinning the deer up to their necks. Shizuko stabbed the knife at the spine that was connected to the hipbone and cut the tendon at the center of the joint. It seemed that it could be done easily but it required considerable skill in reality.

After cutting all of the legs, Shizuko cut the back loin. Then, she disassembled the deer; first taking out the backstrap, then the tenderloin from the trunk, the boned rib from around the rib cage, the meat around the neck, and every part of the meat around the

trunk. She then dismantled the bone connecting the feet joints. Shizuko had a trouble removing the scapula with the shape of battledore which was only in the forelegs but she managed to remove it cleanly somehow. She cut the meat around the head and the tongue after she was done removing bones in the thigh meat.

*(*Sigh*... it's a fine effort if I say so myself. Grandpa, are you always doing this kind of thing alone?)*

Completely dismantling a deer was pretty taxing work. Shizuko honestly thought that she was already too tired to dismantle another one but she couldn't say it.

"I'm fine by myself after this. So please help with the farm work."

"Yes ma'am—"

Shizuko ordered the villagers who helped her to hang up the deer to do farm work. They couldn't do any farm work for a day because they were preparing for dealing the deer since morning.

Shizuko motivated herself to dismantle the deer after seeing the villagers off. It took quite a while to finish the other one with the same method.

"It is over at last..."

She said so while stretching her body because of the tiredness.

However, it didn't end only with dismantling. Next, cutting the large chunks of meat from the dismantled deer to small sizes and applying salt to them was necessary. There were no refrigerators in this era, so if you leave the meat as it is, it will rot. In modern times food is supplied stably and people don't need to worry about it too much, but meat is an important source of protein in the Sengoku Period. Besides, in the year 676, due to meat consumption prohibition, it was forbidden to eat cattle, horse, dogs, Japanese monkeys, and chicken.

(If I'm not mistaken, they were able to eat chicken because they discovered that unfertilized eggs didn't hatch in the Edo period... wasn't that it?)

Before that, the chicken was considered a sacred bird which told time so they mainly treated it as a pet. So in Sengoku Period, the egg industry didn't exist in Japan.

*(Throwing away an important source of protein even though they're desperate to eat.....
Just how much of an 'M' were people in the old days?!)*

Shizuko resumed her work for a bit before she sensed a presence behind her when she turned around casually, there was a beast.

That beast was a four-legged animal covered with long fur. To be more specific, it was a carnivore who belonged to Canidae Canis family, or in short, a wolf.

(Wha, w-w-w-what should I do. Don't tell me, he was lured by the smell of the meat!?)

Behind Shizuko was a stacked mountain of deer meat. Without a doubt, it was lured by the smell coming from the deer's meat and appeared in the village. Anyhow, the gray wolf which noticed the smell from more than three kilometers to the degree that it was separated from its pack had a superb olfaction sense.

(All the villagers have already left by now... aren't I in danger!?)

With nothing on hand that could be used as a weapon, Shizuko realized that she was in a desperate situation. However, when Shizuko looked at the gray wolf carefully, she noticed that it was acting strangely.

(Huh? Somehow... it's staggering quite a bit?)

Shizuko rubbed her eyes and looked at the wolf carefully again. The wolf was being subtle from a while ago however its body was clearly shaking a bit. Shizuko didn't realize it before because of her fear but the wolf was so thin it seemed like there was only bone and skin left. It was easy to understand that even to Shizuko's untrained eyes that the wolf's condition was extremely weak.

If only Shizuko could think about it carefully, she would notice something was strange from the beginning. Because wolves always hunted in packs, seeing one alone should be quite nonexistent. There was also no sign that a pack would come out.

(So that means it is a lone wolf. Then that will explain its greatly weakened state. Even when wolves hunt in a pack, the success rate is less than 10%. It can be said that the success rate is lowered if you hunt alone.)

Even walking was difficult for the wolf in the wolf's current weak condition. However, it could be said that the wolf was struggling to the death. It could still tear off your

neck if you weren't really careful. Shizuko who was nervously thinking observed the wolf closely.

The situation was over briefly after both warily studied each other for a while. The wolf in front of Shizuko fell over like a doll whose strings were cut. It was so sudden that Shizuko didn't know what had happened at first.

"Uwa! Ar, are you alright!?"

Shizuko who noticed that the wolf was already at its limit hurriedly ran to the wolf. Shizuko embraced the wolf without hesitation but the wolf didn't resist her. No... The wolf didn't even have enough strength left to resist her.

"Too, too light!!? Just how many days has it been since the last time you ate!?"

Shizuko didn't really know its original weight but the wolf who woke up at her embrace weighed only ten kilograms.

"It will die because of its greatly weakened state at this rate."

Shizuko quickly returned to the place where the deer were dismantled after dropping the wolf to the ground. She grabbed an appropriate piece of meat and minced it minutely with the dismantling knife.

"It should have no strength left to chew the meat in its current state. So, let's mince the meat..."

Shizuko filled the bucket rolling around her with river water while finely chopping the deer meat.

"Here, you can eat meat if it is like this right."

Shizuko held out the meat to the wolf's mouth after returning with meat and water on her hand. The wolf who noticed the smell was a bit wary of Shizuko but the wolf soon started to eat it because it was very hungry. The wolf ate the meat by chewing it several times so it could be said that it still had strength left to chew even if it was weak.

"Please drink the water as well."

The wolf began to drink the water unwarily when Shizuko put the wooden bucket in

front of the wolf. The wolf kept drinking for a while that made it seem like it was really famished

“Aah, really... It is really no less than hypocrisy.”

Survival of the fittest was the rule in mother nature, so any animal that couldn't get food could only die. Even though Shizuko attacked just now, she came to help the fallen wolf in front of her without thinking. Shizuko, who was amazed by her own action, let out an amazed sigh.

“But... I just can't leave it be, right...”

After that, the villagers who came back from doing farm work and saw the wolf obviously screamed.

Chapter 8

Year 1565, Early June

The season changed from spring to the rainy season. The planting of sweet potatoes was finished by that time and cutting weeds became the priority.

The crops they were currently growing like sweet potato, pumpkin, and tomato had enough water from the rain, so there was no need for them to water the crops directly and they only had to remove the weeds. Because they had tilled and ridged up the soil before harvesting the crops thrice, there was no need to do it frequently. And because the sugarcane had undergone selective breeding, there was no need for pest control. Only the sweet corn needed a lot of water, but rain and river water were enough.

There was little farm work to do these days. The main priority was making the water wheel ^[1] and creating measures for pest control. However, Shizuko got a new secret weapon besides traps for dealing with deer.

“Incredible... such a thing as taming a wolf... as expected of our Village Chief!”

“Haha, you are so great, Chief!”

“Awawawa. Yo, you’re welcome.”

Shizuko could only smile bitterly at the villagers’ overwhelming respectful gazes towards her. Their gazes were directed next to Shizuko, at a proud-looking wolf.

The wolf, which was lured by the smell of the deer’s meat, was supposed to leave after eating the meal Shizuko offered. However, the wolf didn’t leave her side, contrary to her expectation.

Experts have a notion that wolves are dogs’ ancestors. It could mean that the dog’s behavior was inherited from the wolf. This wolf thought that Shizuko was the leader of the pack and the wolf itself wanted to be a member of the pack.

“Well, that’s fine~”

Shizuko decided not to think about it deeply and assumed a carefree attitude since she had kept a dog before. More importantly, information obtained from her exploration revealed possibly thousands of deer coming from around the mountains.

It was easy to figure out how the deer increased so greatly. The sunshine reached the forest floor because the forest had been cleared halfway. Because of that, weeds under the trees grew more thickly, changing the area around the forest floor. There were also no carnivores such as wolves to be their natural enemies. It was a perfect environment for deer to grow in large numbers since there was a farm nearby and food was abundant. Furthermore, it was said that the deer population could double in size in the next four years. Even if the number of the males declined, with polygamy, their proliferation wouldn't decline.

(The cause of the increase in the deer population is the extinction of their natural enemies like Japanese wolves and the depopulation of low upland areas even in modern Japan. There are other reasons as well such as an increase in abandoned cultivated lands and the decrease of fallen snow in winter due to global warming.)

Shizuko thought, however, that the cause of the increase of deer this time was a little different. In her era, deer increased exclusively in the low uplands. Now, the flat cultivated land was scarce, the condition regarding agricultural production was worse than in her era, and the crop yields from the area around the low uplands had been bad from the very beginning. On top of that, the rural area around the mountain region had a low-density population, so there were not many cultivated areas left unattended. There were also no natural enemies and people to exterminate them. It could be said that the mountain regions in the modern era were a perfect environment for deer to increase.

Nevertheless, the deer remained as troublesome pests even in the modern era and the Sengoku period. It wasn't a trivial effort to overturn the environment once the growing environment for the deer was ready. In all likelihood, the deer would eat the newly-planted, budding trees.

A moderate thinning was necessary considering the plants eaten by the deer. But there weren't enough people for that purpose. There were around twenty people who could do labor but only ten of them were adept at farm work because this was only a small village. There were five people for blacksmithing and wood processing and the remaining five were for making compost. In other words, this village couldn't spare more people to hunt for deer.

“Hmm, that means... the way to deal with the deer’s increase for the time being is... none other than that, right~”

Shizuko tried thinking of many solutions while putting her hand on her chin but there was only one realistic plan in the end. That was a plan to prevent the increase... by focusing on... targeting the newborns and fawns, and the females over the males. This was her plan to thin out the deer.

“If it’s like that, Wittmann needs to have a pack soon but... have you ever seen a female before?”

She crouched down before the wolf beside her that she’d named Wittmann. Shizuko became its godparent as a matter of course, but she thought to herself, “Why a German name?”

Shizuko asked such question while patting Wittmann’s head. Of course, there was no decent reply. Wittmann made a face that looked comfortable from the head pats.

“There are none, right~. I thought that you were a Japanese wolf, but you’re a gray wolf^[2]... you can’t find your wife, eh~”

I will explain Wittmann’s appearance again. Ignoring his initially thin appearance, his head and body length is around 140 cm and his body weight is up to 50 kilograms. The proud, dignified wolf’s figure is successfully regained. The Japanese wolf’s size can’t quite reach 140 cm because it is assumed that the Japanese wolf is close to one meter. In other words, there must be someone who brought gray wolves from another continent.

(There is no law restricting animal imports in the Sengoku period, right~. I guess they brought animals as they pleased.)

Someone from Europe or China brought gray wolves as an offering. Then, they were handed over to either a shogun, famous people, or a wealthy merchant of Sakai. However, some wolves escaped by looking for a chance and ran to the mountain unharmed. Shizuko thought that Wittmann was one such wolf.

“Perhaps the other wolves are still alive. And maybe they are deer hunting near here unexpectedly?”

The gray wolves lived in groups of seven to thirteen heads with a male and a female

as the center of the group. A group like this could be called a pack. A rank was determined for all of the individuals in that strict, vertically-structured society. The highest-ranking male was called the Alpha male and similarly, the Alpha female for the female. The other female wolves didn't give birth to new pups if the alpha male and female were mated. There were rare exceptions but the basic wolves' ecology was like that.

"Well, as if that would happen."

She didn't find a better solution even after thinking a lot of difficult things. The conclusion Shizuko came up with was to leave the farm to the villagers and take Wittmann to the mountain.



Let's target the fawns – though Shizuko said that, they couldn't be met so easily. At any rate, the opponent was a wild game so they were very alert. The deer would run as soon as they noticed her smell even if she luckily came upon one from upwind. Shizuko didn't have the hunter's skill to shoot from downwind without being noticed by her prey. So, was there any reason for Shizuko to climb the mountain?

"So, maybe this area is the feeding ground?"

The reason was to find the deer's feeding ground. The mountain wasn't overgrown enough to all be feeding grounds for the deer. Places with abundant weeds beneath the trees to feed on were scattered around the mountain. If that was the case, the deer were very likely to come to those places at meal times.

"I can set up the rope this time. Wittmann, please stand still for a bit."

Shizuko unraveled the ropes wrapped around her belly as she crouched down near Wittmann. The rope hadn't been used to constrain or strangle a wolf nor it would be used to tie Wittmann. The knot could be easily untied and the rope could be separated into four coils eventually. She tied one end to a tree which was sturdy and thick enough and tied the other side to another nearby tree.

"Well, it is better than nothing. It is a rope soaked in the smell of their natural enemy."

Shizuko muttered this with a sense full of accomplishment after she finished tying the

rope.

She set up the scent of the deer's natural enemies, or the wolf's, on the feeding ground. The deer feared the smell and would avoid the feeding ground. However, Shizuko thought it wouldn't have that much of an effect.

"They will definitely come to the feeding ground if they know that there are no wolves there."

The deer would come to the feeding ground if they figured out it was only the smell of a wolf, and none were actually there. It was a gimmick to buy some time and somewhat meaningless.

"Well then, I shall go back."

She couldn't help but worry about the things from before. Shizuko said it loudly as if to clear some unnecessary thoughts from her head.



The work outside nearly stopped due to the downpour during the rainy season. To put it simply, the villagers including Shizuko had a day off from having nothing to do. There were various tasks that could be done, but Shizuko boldly decided that it was fine to slack off. In a word, she wanted to laze around. However, Shizuko's lazy time abruptly ended in the afternoon.

"I'm sorry for the sudden visit."

The reason for this was because Mori Yoshinari came looking for Shizuko's house in the afternoon. Shizuko was drinking tea from the chameleon plant^[3] while eating some dried venison. Perhaps her appearance was rude if you thought about it, but Mori Yoshinari didn't particularly mind it.

"Ah, no... I have shown you something unsightly."

Shizuko, who blushed from embarrassment, coughed to gloss over the awkward situation.

"Anyway, what is your business today?"

“Umu. First of all, this is regarding the hot spring made by Shizuko-dono.”

“Yes? Um... What about the hot spring?”

“The Lord is really pleased with it. There is a plan to greatly remodel the hot spring. Therefore, I would like to Shizuko-dono lead the project.”

Shizuko almost spat out the chameleon tea from her mouth without thinking when she heard that. But she endured and swallowed it back somehow. Still, some of it was still in her throat and she almost choked.

“**cough cough**... What do you plan to do in the remodel?”

“The Lord is, of course, thinking about using it as a kind of prize. Although he said so, he won’t say that it is a suggestion from Shizuko-dono. The point is I want you to particularly separate the hot spring used for the reward and the hot spring used for Shizuko-dono’s everyday use.”

“Yes... that is fine if that’s the case. But the detailed remodeling will take time. And you’ll have to split the hot spring into four parts.”

“We wish Shizuko-dono take over the lead in that aspect too. Of course, my Lord said that there will be suitable reward for Shizuko-dono when you have completed building it”

Even if Mori Yoshinari said so, Shizuko only had one choice. However, it wouldn’t be an easy task even if she took the request. There would have to be an increase in the amount of hot spring water anyhow.

The hot spring she had right now simply removed the impurities in the hot water through a simple filter at the water source. The filtered hot water would be carried to the bath through a wooden pipe. In order for the hot water to stay warm, there would have to be some method to retain heat at the spot where the hot water poured out. Shizuko took account of that. Well, there wasn’t a method to confirm if that would be possible.

“I understand. Consider it done.”

“Is that so? Much appreciated.”

Mori Yoshinari slightly lowered his head while saying so. *As humble a person as ever*, Shizuko thought.

“These are only sample materials, but I managed to collect the rest.”

“Ah, is that so? I’m grateful for that.”

“But what are you going to do with such things?”

“Well, for various reasons... I can’t say it for now but we should see the results in at least three years.”

“I understand. However, I want to ask you a question. Is that for the Lord’s sake?”

Shizuko nodded at that question without hesitation. If it succeeded, besides just Nobunaga Oda, it was desired by all countrymen. Moreover, it was a thing which was thought not to be available in Japan.

(It is trivial information in the modern era but it’s secret information in this era. I can’t say it easily. Only 30 kilograms can be made from the requested material but... it should be enough.)

“I understand. If that is true then I will believe in Shizuko-dono.”

“Thank you very much.”

Shizuko lowered her head deeply at Mori Yoshinari’s words.

Footnotes :

1. This



2. Here



3. This



Chapter 9

Year 1565, Mid July

The heat made her skin wet with sweat since the season changed from the rainy season to summer. Shizuko's workload didn't decrease, rather, her workload was only rising rapidly.

"It's hot..."

Shizuko hydrated herself with the water from a flask made of bamboo as she said so.

She felt like she wants to bath in the cold water and forget everything. She would really do it if there was no one around her. It was a bit different feeling from splashing water on one's head but unfortunately, she wasn't allowed to do such a thing. Since they were building a bathhouse as strong as a fortress in front of her. What's more, Shizuko was the construction overseer, a position where she couldn't run playing and forgetting everything.

"There is a terrible feeling of being out of place when there is such a tough building in the village but... well, that is fine"

No matter how gorgeous the hot spring was, there was a terrible feeling of it being out of place with the surrounding buildings that it would only make the hot spring suspicious. So Shizuko advised them to do the same thing to the surrounding houses. The result was, she got permission and the village houses were completely renovated. The house became neater and it was generally popular among the villager but Wittmann seemed that he couldn't calm down in the new house. So Shizuko went out with him basking in the sun.

"Ah, I should start hunting deer soon"

Even if it was said that she was the overseer, she only had to decide what to do in the morning and it wouldn't be necessary for her to anything after that. It wouldn't be a problem to leave her problem for tomorrow since she was different than the villagers who have to struggle desperately. It could be said that it was the only thing that Shizuko can be thankful about and she was really grateful for that.

“Let’s start the preparation...”

Shizuko returned to her house while muttering so. There was no Wittmann there but Shizuko thought that he would be in the river’s vicinity so she began to prepare.

She didn’t take anything special even if she said she would do a preparation. She brought a water flask made from bamboo for water supply, a knife for blood draining, a hemp rope for capturing the prey, whistle for giving orders to Wittmann, and a crossbow for hunting. There were several reasons why she brought a crossbow but not a bow that was created as a tool for hunting and used later as a weapon.

The problem with a bow was that it’s power depended on how far a human could draw the string. However, for a crossbow, it had a device and mechanism such as a lever and hoist gear that could be used in conjunction with the structure. It was possible to use a bow which has a problem with requiring human power to draw it by using this mechanism. It also made it easier to aim by attaching a sight to the base. And it could raise further the accuracy of the crossbow which originally already has a high accuracy. One of its advantages was the training period to be able to use crossbow was shorter than a bow. It also didn’t need to require a craftsmen’s skill compared to a bow and it was fine even if it was created with a simple structure/framework.

On the other hand, its ability to do rapid fire was lost because of its structure. However, rapid fire was considered unnecessary since the foundation of hunting was to certainly kill it in one hit. Moreover, its power was weak even if it was treated under the category of weapons available in the modern era and it would be a fine weapon in the Sengoku period if even a gun was treated a valuable article.

To conclude, crossbow advantages were there was almost no shooting sound, it was possible to launch even without bullets, it could be created at low cost and at a high reliability, it was lightweight as it made from wood only, easy to maintain and repair, able to be used with a little practice, its accuracy was high within a hundred meters, and those were only the points she could mention of. On the other hand, the disadvantages were it couldn’t be used for shooting from a long distance, rapid fire was impossible, its power couldn’t be more than the fixed amount, and its strength was lower than metal.

Shizuko’s reason to choose crossbow rather than a bow was because of its relatively ease of use and her impression that it was easy handling a horizontal shooting. She didn’t have much skill to handle a bow to begin with. That being the case, it was easier

to shoot with an image similar to shooting with military pachinko. Even so, people had to practice well to be ready to use it since you still needed practice several times sometimes. She was able to shoot a still enemy within dozens of meters thanks to the practice.

“Should I bring several bundles of arrows?”

It wasn't necessary to bring arrows to the point of having to bring a quiver since she didn't plan to hunt in a large amount. The next was to bring a bowstring for the hoist gear and the preparation would be completed.

“Well then, the preparation is completed. Should I call Wittmann?”

As she muttered so, Shizuko put a whistle to her mouth and blew it.

Even it was said to be a hunt, what Shizuko doing was only hunting the fawns. By doing this, the deer's community would be aging and the fertility would decline. However, their number was no joke. There was a limit to how many deers Shizuko alone could hunt. Furthermore, she couldn't afford to lose any protein source by uselessly culling the deer. Because there was a limit to how much meat she can preserve by making it into dried meat. It required a precise balance between culling the deer's amount and using the deer without wasting it uselessly even once.

“Ah, there are deer's tracks. Moreover, it quite new... maybe they are nearby”

Shizuko muttered so while squatting down and observing the deer's track. There was no worry for their smell to be noticed if they pursue them since the track's direction was upwind after examining where the wind blows.

“The fawn are two and the adult is one... they must be parent and child. Wittmann, please aim at the fawn”

She predicted the deer's number by their tracks. She tried her best to not make a sound when advancing and went to a bit open place. It seemed that the parent and child went to feed on the grown undergrowth in the feeding ground.

“Where are you... there you are”

There were three deers in a place a bit away from where Shizuko was when she looked around. The deer's distance was about thirty meters when she measured it with her

eye and it was still within the crossbow range. But where the deer facing was bad, they could be seen facing vertically rather than horizontally from here.

“(It can’t be helped. Wittmann, please target the fawn on the right because I will aim at the fawn in the back)”

She took the crossbow which she carried on her back after giving Wittmann a simple order by hand. Shizuko already pulled the string before she climbs the mountain so she only has to put an arrow. Shizuko decided to aim at the fawn while holding the whistle after checking the wind direction again.

Shizuko pulled the trigger at the moment her aim was steady. The arrow drew an arc and precisely pierced the back of the fawn’s head. The adult deer and the other fawn having noticed the foreign enemy ran to the forest at full speed.

Shizuko blew the whistle with all her might. It was a sign “GO!” for Wittmann. Wittmann who understood the given order from the whistle jumped out from the bush. He accelerated to the top speed of 70 kilometers per hour as it was a short and decisive battle. The deer also has a top speed close to that of a wolf but a fawn’s body couldn’t exert the same speed. It couldn’t follow the escaping mother, it couldn’t let out a resistance that can be called resistance and lost its life as it is.

“There was no counterattack, huh”

She readied her crossbow in case the mother launched a counterattack but it became a needless anxiety. It vanished to the forest just like that. Shizuko blew the whistle again after removing the arrow from the crossbow. It was a sound with delicate interval this time. The content of the order was “Bring the prey here!” if translated to Japanese.

It was only permitted to eat the prey from the first rank because the wolves had a strict vertical society that was stricter than human society. Therefore, Shizuko fed Wittmann with the meat after finished processing and eat lightly the meat. In modern time, there would be dumb people who would say things like “Pitiful” or “Cruel” but people had to understand about wolf habits and ecology if they want to keep a wolf as a pet. However, Shizuko has a reason to think like that because she was bitten hard by her pet dog in her childhood.

She drained the two fawns off the blood, tied them to a suitable branch and carried it.

She descended the mountain and carried out the draining blood and cooling process at the usual place. She was only draining the blood in the mountain since it was only necessary to remove the intestines within an hour. Although it was fine to throw it away, She wanted to bring those to home as much as she can since she could be used as materials for making compost.

“There is not really much meat since it is a fawn, eh~”

She couldn't get fur and meat as much as grown-up deer but she still got a fair amount of them. However, Shizuko only dismantled a fawn and the other fawn was used for Wittmann's meal. She took out the liver, lightly sprinkled it with salt and grill it. It was a simple cooking but a food with blood-raising effect was valuable. She wanted to eat it while she could eat it.

“Well then, I finished eating a meal so its Wittmann's turn next”

Shizuko took out the other fawn from the river after finished eating all of the livers. It was placed in front of Wittmann as it was after peeling off the fur.

“That is your meat”

The Wittmann who understood her word was energetically biting the meat. He tore off the meat without minding the tendon or the cartilage

“As one would expect of masseter muscle power from a 180kg wolf...”

Shizuko was impressed at Wittmann who completely ate up the fawn in a flash.



The dismantled deer meat was cut into a moderate size and distributed to the villagers. It was the so-called “sharing a portion of the profit with others” deed. It would be resulted in improving the villager's nutrition and raised their motivation. There was no reason for the hunting to always succeed the most, it couldn't be done unless hunting for several days or you could say it as a continuous session. And it wasn't possible to always meet a deer. They would notice your smell immediately if you were unluckily in the downwind position. And the hunting wouldn't be a success either if you didn't notice the deer before them even if you were in the upwind position.

“I wonder where is your partner?”

Shizuko who lied down on the floor talked to Wittmann. It was Wittmann who stared at Shizuko with a strange expression at first but he immediately faced away whether it was because of he lost his interest or not.

(he must be an individual who was brought from a cold region judging from his size. Though I think that someone brought male and female as a set~)

Of course, she couldn't deny the possibility of the wolf being dead. Since Wittmann was in almost dying state when she found him. It was sure that he will die if Shizuko didn't help him. In the first place, wolves had a low success rate at ten percent even if they hunt in packs. Moreover, the success rate became less than one percent if they were alone.

“Did it survived by eating animal carcasses or did it really die... Is there really a female individual in the first place. Arghh no no”

No answer would come out even if she thought about it so she shook her head to clear those thinking. The answer would come out eventually, that was the conclusion she always has.

“Tomorrow will soon come too, so it is time to sleep”

She spread out the sleeping mat, took off her kimono and used it as a bed cover.

“Well, good night, Wittmann”

As soon as she said so, she got into a deep sleep after ten seconds.



Early August, the time for summer season became full-scale. It was the time to harvest tomatoes, pumpkins, and sweet corns except sweet potatoes and sugarcane. The villagers worked hard to grow the vegetables but they felt a bit unpleasant when eating them because they never saw those foods.

“Hmm, the tomato is so-so. The pollinisation is good and it has a nice size since we pluck off the lateral bud. Isn't it will be edible before long?”

There were a few tomatoes that didn't turn red yet but the majority of it was already red. She harvested several of them to inspect the growth and Shizuko moved onto the pumpkin area next.

"Its skin is dark green and it is able to exert suberin well from its peduncle. And the size is alright, maybe it's already the time to harvest it?"

There was no problem to harvest the pumpkin soon if it was calculated from the artificial pollinisation done in July since the pumpkin entered proper time after become accrescent from thirty to forty days. But first of all, they had to run a trial harvest to make sure that there is no problem in harvesting.

"How about the sweet corn~"

She headed to the sweet corn area after harvesting about three suitable pumpkins. She harvested four corns with brown hairs at their tip and took them back to the village. Since she told the villagers to prepare the hot water beforehand, she was saved the trouble of preparing it by herself when she went back.

"Saki-san, Osora-san, is the preparation ready?"

One of the women turned to her when Shizuko called them. She was a beautiful woman even if she was skinny and she had well-featured looks if Shizuko said so herself

"Your hot water preparation is completed. The other preparation is complete but... I'm worried about it, to be honest"

Shizuko thought that her expression of worrying a little bit while asking a question was cute even seen from woman's perspective such as her.

(What is with this cute creature)

Wash the corns and the tomatoes cleanly, cut the corns into a moderate size and threw it into the pot. The corn that was just harvested has no need for seasoning. It tasted the best when you boiled then ate it as it was. Osora-san felt daunted because of the corn's appearance was bit by bit bright yellow.

"Slice the tomato as it is and cut the pumpkin into bite-sized. Leave out the seeds since they can be used for something else... and boil it together with the dear meat. Miso

and sake as the seasoning”

The fact was it was recommended to do sun-drying for seven to ten days but the sun-drying process was cut for the sake of confirming the harvest situation. She took out the pumpkin seeds and put the pumpkin in a bucket filled with water. The bucket was used for washing the pumpkin to remove its seeds later. Cut the sarcocarp into bite-sized pieces

“Its finished with this. Well then, how will the nabe turn out?”

Shizuko raised her expectation in her heart for the finished dish when looking at the boiling nabe.

Chapter 10

Year 1565, Early August

The result of the trial harvest was excellent

Even the villagers, who were frightened at the dish's appearance at first, were rushing to the dish after knowing its taste. It seemed like a feast to the villagers since sweet corn and pumpkin were vegetables with a sweet taste. However, it wasn't only a trial harvest this time, but they also had to present this harvest to Nobunaga. It was necessary for them to regain back Nobunaga's trust by presenting the yield to him ahead of time since they didn't present enough yield until now.

"Do I have to go to the lord wearing that difficult to move formal dress..."

This time, the presented vegetables to Nobunaga were sweet potato, pumpkin, sweet corn and tomato. Although the sweet potato wasn't in the time to harvest it but it wouldn't be bad to let Nobunaga taste it's trial harvest. So she thought that it was fine to add it to the offering. Unlike the trial harvest, the pumpkin would be sun-dried first and the sweet corn and tomato would be harvested in the morning of that day.

Those vegetables would be placed on a large (hand?)made cart. It would be pulled by a cow originally but they couldn't lose the only village cow as a cow was a splendid workforce for farming.

"Kanezou-san, Tagosaku-san, thank you"

Shizuko called out to the two person who would pulling out the cart in exchange for the cow. They raised a thumb in reply to Shizuko's call. The one who taught that hand sign was of course Shizuko but unexpectedly the villagers (especially the men) liked it.

Shizuko walked in the same pace with them as they finished their preparation to pull the cart. For the most part, Mori Yoshinari already conveyed the matter regarding her visit to Nobunaga. However, Shizuko felt considerably afraid because of the answer at that time was "I'm looking forward to it".

“I want someone to change my place...”

She turned toward Kanezou and Tagosaku while saying so but they splendidly averted their gaze. She looked up to the clear sky after unintentionally sighing.

“It looks like it will be hot again today”

She muttered just a few words when she saw the cloudless blue sky.

It took many hours to enter the castle town, received the permit to enter the castle after explaining things to the castle’s gatekeeper, finished various preparations and changed to formal dress, waiting at the empty audience chamber for about 10 to 20 minutes, and Nobunaga finally appeared.

“I wish to talk about showing the harvest result today”

Shizuko who lowered her head to Nobunaga simply informed so.

“Show me the result. So raise your face”

Shizuko raised her face in response to those words. And she said

“For today’s matter we shall be showing the harvest result, please enjoy the dish made from the harvested crops”

“A dish... you say”

“Yes, please”

She sent an eye signal to the nearby person to get them to carry the offered crops and a dish made from those crops. Shizuko didn’t miss the moment when Nobunaga reacted slightly at the dish.

(Nobunaga loves rare things. He is a person who has a flexible mindset, enough to understand a globe while being a person of this period. So he will be interested in a never before seen dish... or he should be)

“Let me explain this”

After having lowered her head once again, Shizuko began to talk while touching the

harvest piled up in front of her.

“There are three samples for today’s presented harvest. The first one is pumpkin, the second one is corn, and the third one is tomato. The last is sweet potato which is not in harvest time yet but I wish that you do some test sampling so I can add it to the offering”

“How should I say it... this is full of things I have never seen before”

The surrounding war chiefs who saw the offering made a commotion. However, that commotion died quickly when Nobunaga raised a hand.

“You may continue”

“Yes. And then about the dish... first of all, the pumpkin and the deer meat are cooked in miso^[1], the corn is boiled, Onigiri made from sweet potato and miso^[2], and please eat the tomato while only sprinkling it with salt”

“Hou~ ... this corn you said, is tinged with a color close to glittering gold. But I will eat the pumpkin first”

He took it with chopsticks and put it in his mouth as he said so. Shizuko thought “Is it really fine eating that without doing poison tasting first?” but Nobunaga seemed like he was unconcerned about such a matter. Shizuko waited for Nobunaga’s next words while thinking that perhaps the poison tasting was already done beforehand.

He chewed it normally but that Nobunaga, who suddenly stopped, put down his chopstick. His face seemed slightly surprised. Shizuko, who had some sweat running down her cheek, and the surrounding retainers were naturally flustered.

“Mi-Milord! Don’t tell me! Shizuko-dono poisoned it!”

“Wait!”

Hideyoshi, who hurriedly misunderstood that the dish was poisoned, was stopped by someone’s voice right before he grabbed Shizuko. Of course, the owner of that voice was Nobunaga. He looked at Shizuko with a serious expression unlike just now.

“Mi-Milord? That is...?”

“This food, I have never tasted food with this kind of texture until now. And yet, this food’s taste when being chewed is truly nice. It is also able to produce a slight sweet taste. Delicious, truly delicious”

Nobunaga said so while smiling. The retainers, who understood that the poisoning was a misunderstanding, patted their chests out of relief after looking at Nobunaga’s expression.

After that, Nobunaga ate the dish in silence. Nobunaga was said to be indifferent regarding his meal but he ate it because he might be curious about the new food’s taste. Nobunaga turned toward Shizuko after slowly putting down the chopstick.

“It was certainly delicious. And it must be an abundant harvest if you were able to present it with only this much of a portion”

Shizuko patted her chest out of relief at Nobunaga who spoke while smiling.

“However...”

But that was only for an instant. Nobunaga, who changed his expression quickly, asked Shizuko while glaring at her.

“What is the reason for you not choosing rice? Rice is different than other crops in that rice is an important supply item. You aren’t trying to produce it too looking at your state. Tell me about your reason. Don’t tell me, the reason why you do that is because of this rare food?”

In the Sengoku Period, the reason why there were many wars that broke out in winter was because of farmers finishing the farmwork for producing rice during that time. Since rice was an important supplies for war unlike vegetables. And the means to secure a lot of rice was more important than the war.

“...Let me explain the reason behind this to my esteemed lord and also his retainers”

“I don’t mind. Speak”

Shizuko stared at Nobunaga after lowering her head once and said,

“I consider it is necessary for the sake of my esteemed lord to accomplish the unification and building of a 『rich country, strong army』 nation”

“Did you say rich country, strong army?”

Shizuko gave a small nod at Nobunaga’s word.

“It means improving the economic industry and strengthening the army my esteemed lord”

However, Shizuko continued further, her words after saying the sentence she just said with a bit of stress.

“There is no country that is able to become a 『rich country, strong army』 as far as I know”

Nobunaga’s expression changed for an instant. According to Shizuko’s story, it meant that no daimyo , not even the shogun couldn’t do 『rich country, strong army』 yet depended on the way he interpreted it. In short, Nobunaga was included in that too. Naturally the retainer’s expression also changed but Nobunaga stopped them by hand before they were able to say anything.

“You may continue”

“...Let me explain myself beforehand, I have no plan to make a fool of my esteemed lord, not in the least. But, it doesn’t change that what I just said was true”

“I don’t mind. But, from the way you say it, you have a plan to fulfill that 『rich country, strong army』 thing, right?”

Shizuko felt that there would be no mercy if she had no answer judging from the sharp gaze pointed at her by Nobunaga when he asked her the question. A sweat drop unintentionally streamed down her cheek at his vigor but Shizuko braced herself as if she was driving away her fear.

“Within 『rich country, strong army』 is a powerful army which can be realized with doing military system reformation by reinforcing the armaments. However, regarding the rich country... to sum it up, it is necessary to devise a plan to strengthen our national power”

“...”

“Today’s presented and eaten crops can be cultivated even in barren land. Furthermore, we can cultivate it with almost no time and effort. In other words, it is possible that it can be cultivated along with the rice”

Cultivating the rice couldn’t be excluded because it was the cornerstone. However, if they cultivated nothing but rice, the farmer would lose their food when there was a bad harvest. Therefore, the crops that could grow even in the barren land became essential.

(Especially, sweet potato’s have a high reproductivity ability, they will grow even in the barren land unless there is a mistake in procedure. Therefore, it is relatively easy to be raised by a beginner. There is a reason that sweet potato’s was cultivated extensively as a measure for famines since the Edo Period)

Moreover, the sweet potato which used by Shizuko wasn’t the hereditary one in these days but the one which had undergone selective breeding from modern science. Sweet potato, pumpkin, tomato, sweet corn and sugarcane were quite resistant toward pest and disease and there was no worry that they would die unless in rare circumstances.

“It is also highly nutritious and will reduce children mortality rate due to malnutrition”

If the children mortality rate declined, it meant that the labour force for farmwork would increase. There was a difference in the basis of a country where a hundred children were born but only half of them were able to grow up to be an adult compared to a country where ninety percent of the children grew up to be an adult. Rice and vegetables would be produced through the farmwork and about the military force of course,

“By using effective methods, the yield will be increased. The commoner’s nutrition will be increased as the consequence. And we can be a rich country by realizing those points. And thus, we can plan for the steadily rising number of children to be used to increase our military force. Thus we able to realize the strong army”

A dry sound from the folding fan resounded across the room the moment she finished saying that.

“Splendid! I never took farmwork into account that far. I can certainly ascertain your ability”

Nobunaga said so as he stood up while pointing the folding fan at Shizuko

Shizuko hurriedly lowered her head because all of the warchief who saw that lowered their head.

“Raise your head, Shizuko”

“Yes”

Nobunaga lightly hit Shizuko, who slowly raised her face, at her forehead with the tip of the folding fan. She, who didn't know what that meant, couldn't understand what Nobunaga's conduct meant at all.

“Your quick-wittedness and your steady spirit to not avert your gaze from me are excellent. Its regrettable that you are a woman”

“Ha, ha...”

“Let me declare it once again, you are mine. The only time you may leave me is when you die”

Nobunaga kept talking while floating a thin smile after removing the folding fan from her head.

“The thing you should do for me... do you understand it?”

Shizuko tightened her expression and nodded strongly at those words.

Nobunaga's words were unlike before which it had the feeling of “I'll kill you if you betray me” when they first met. She felt that Nobunaga began to think to genuinely use her as his follower. That was why Nobunaga asked her about things she should do.

(Since I can't go home, I will survive the sengoku period...!)

The things she should do meant that it wouldn't do for her not to work as Nobunaga's retainer. She had to survive the sengoku period since she didn't know how to return to her time. Moreover, there was no lord other than Nobunaga who thought that woman could be used as a retainer in this period. Therefore, it could be said that there was no other options for her about how to work for Nobunaga.

Shizuko, who understood it once again, was a bit eager in her heart.

“Yoshinari! Gather about fifty farmers”

“Ha!”

“Shizuko, I’m going to attack Mino. I’ll entrust a new territory to you. Create enough productivity to the point that it can sustain Owari by using the gathered villagers”

“Yessir!”

As she lowered her head, Shizuko thought about history.

(If I remember rightly, Nobunaga become a daimyo who own two countries, Owari and Mino, two years from now in the tenth year of Eiroku Era (year 1567)... Since his territory expansion will have a surging wave momentum from there, so until then I have to raise our productivity)

The name Sengoku Period was really fitting in this world where there would be a war between fellow countrymen somewhere. However, there was a lot of soldiers, who went to the war, who were originally farmers that became provincial samurai. And then, the people who were killed in the wars, would be connected as it was to the decline of the rice productivity.

*(Ichijouin Kakukei (Ashikaga Yoshiaki) get closer to Nobunaga in July of the eleventh year of Eiroku Era (Year 1568) and Nobunaga starts to proceeding to the capital... that means three years from now huh. Hmm, that means I have to prepare enough of **that** at the time of invasion of theIse huh)*

She had to make enough productivity to the extent that it covered up the portion of the farmers who drafted into the war. Shizuko believed that, that issue was the one that she had to tackle.

(Ah, things that I should do are repeating rotated crops cultivation and two crops a year... We should avoid immediately doing the paddy field and planting the seeds for rice but we have to reform about how to cultivate the seedbed and doing the rice nursery. We need to get a rotary tiller^[3] tool for checkrowing, rotary field weeding machine^[4], to harvest the rice by cutting up the tip, and threshing machine to be used for separating the rice from its husk)

The truth was, she had so many tasks that it could roll her eyes. But more than that, an expectation rose in her heart as she was able to use vast farmlands.

Footnotes:



1.



2.



3.

Chapter 11

Year 1565, Late August

Late August, Shizuko and the villagers harvested all of the crops except sweet corn and sweet potatoes. There was a reason why they left the sweet corn over the season. The corn would ripen if left untreated and the seeds could be collected. It meant that Shizuko thought about making the next year's seeds.

(Thank god, it's not F1)

There were two varieties of seeds for corn. The first one was the original corn seed called native species or purebred variety. The second one was an F1 hybrid (first cross) made from two different kinds of purebred, better known as F1. F1 fruits were big and resistant to disease but on the other hand, the same corn couldn't be harvested in the following year.

Fortunately, the corn seed Shizuko had was the original native species that had been selectively bred by her grandfather. Because of that, even if they planted the seed again in the next year, it would grow into exactly the same variety. They were strong against diseases, have an extremely soft kernel, tasted refreshingly sweet taste, and could be harvested multiple times. The demerits were that they needed a lot more water than normal corn. However, since Shizuko didn't have to worry about water bills here, the demerit was basically non-existent.

(Hmm, I will split 2 hectares plot of land that will be used for crop rotation into eight sections. 1 section for sugarcane, another 1 section for sweet potato and 2 sections for the rice since it is our staple.)

Repeat cultivation meant cultivating the same crop in the same field repeatedly. Crop rotation is a technique for cultivating crops with different natures in the same field in one cycle in years. By periodically rotating the cultivated crops, nutritional balance in the soil could be attained and the yield and the quality were improved. Also, it could prevent the problem of the declining harvest amount and quality due to pests and pathogens from the repeated cultivation. Shizuko planned one cycle to be per four years and decided to move two sets of 0,5 hectares of plowed land.

(We do repeat cultivation in spring and autumn, and then we'll change the plowed land every one year, then improve the soil nutrition with compost. This way, the productivity will be increased rapidly.)

Shizuko planned to completely organize the current farmland and remodel it to a land that was suitable for crop rotation and repeated cultivation. Fortunately, if all of the current farmland was prepared, it could be made into the same 2 hectares as planned.

But it was not enough if it was only to that extent. The needed land were 1 hectare for sugarcane, 1 hectare for sweet potato and 2 hectares for rice. The total of current farmland did not even reach 4 hectares. The fifty farmers from Mori Yoshinari were ordered by Nobunaga came next year. There was a need to prepare the least amount plot of land until that time came.

(Uhhh, it can't be helped then. Let's ask Mori-sama for more temporary manpower for help)

Because Shizuko didn't have enough manpower, she had no choice but to request Mori Yoshinari to provide additional manpower. Mori Yoshinari would be willing to accept Shizuko's request since Shizuko's agrarian reform plan was being implemented to national policy. However, she couldn't ask for help excessively. And of course, an excessive expectation was not allowed.

(Well, that is for a half year later... will it be possible to do soil preparation till then?)

Shizuko, who thought that no results would come out of it even if she thought long and hard about it- stopped thinking about difficult things.

(Well then, I have to work hard today as well)

In order to finish the work before her, Shizuko carried the work tools and left the house behind.

◇ ◇ ◇

A week later.

“Today, we will start harvesting the sweet potatoes for the first time”

“Yes ma’am!”

They planted sweet potatoes in early May and it was ready to harvest approximately four months later which meant that the first harvest for sweet potatoes came around early September. The villagers were in high spirit since the morning of that day and they gave a lively reply. It was expected since sweet potatoes were the most popular among the trial harvests. What made it popular was that sweet potato was able to fill one’s stomach; which made it different than the rest.

“They were fairly large when we did a trial harvesting last week so for today we’ll dig in this area up to the place with the signboard”

The planted sweet potatoes in this vast plowed land had varied growth because Shizuko and co planted the seedlings once a week. In order to make it easy to understand, Shizuko planted signboards telling the planting time. If they have a boundary around that area, they could avoid digging early.

“First of all, for harvesting sweet potatoes, we have to cut its stem. We can start the harvest after we do that.”

“Village chief, what should people who do the harvesting do?”

“Please bring back the soil-filled wooden bucket to the village. We will dry the potatoes in the sun for a day and then dry them in the shade for one week”

At that moment, boos and jeers came out from the villagers. The villagers naturally thought that they would be able to eat the potatoes immediately on the spot.

“Shut up! Outright eating the potato after the harvest isn’t delicious at all. Because the potatoes will taste sweeter after we dry them. Between sweet and fluffy potatoes and simple potatoes... which one would you want to eat?”

Shizuko declared so while pointing the wooden shovel in her hand at the villagers. The villagers didn’t want to eat normal potatoes as expected so they decided to go silent with an awkward expression.

“Then, let’s get started~”

Shizuko who felt good after succeeding in convincing the villagers lightly spoke with a smile of satisfaction.

We brought back the harvested sweet potatoes to the village as they were. There, we gently brushed off the dirt and left them to dry in the sun. Gathering up all of the inedible parts, it would all be used for compost and mulch. We returned the soil that was dug up back to normal.

Such a harvest can only be done once a week. In the meantime, I spent time maintaining the arable land. The job was to divide the cultivated land into 8 different parts. The length is 200 meters and the width is also 200 meters wide. The calculation is made so that each crop gets 0.5 hectares of arable land each. Thinking of 2 groups of arable land as a set, we'll rotate them in a 4-year cycle. One big point of the crop rotation strategy is because of the poultry farm that shouldn't exist in this era yet.

It's because if you spread out the rice husks in the chicken breeding grounds, chicken droppings will fall on top of it. When switching the area over to a field, you just have to mix it in with the soil. The feed is made from vegetable scraps, animal and fish bones which are crushed up, or even crushed up shells – things that humans do not normally eat, so it's not a problem.

On the other hand, since they weren't given corn, the egg yolk became whitish, not yellowish^[1]. Basically egg yolk color varied depending on the fodder the hen eats. The egg yolk would turn into bluish color if the hen fed on bluish fodder. Of course, the egg yolk would turn into whitish if something like bone powder was fed to the hen.

(Well, it seems that I'm the only one who has a knowledge that egg yolk has a bright yellow color... there shouldn't be any problems~)

Since it seemed that there was no hen's egg industry, egg as a food surely would become a high-class item. Therefore no one would find it out strange if the egg yolks weren't yellow.

"But can we get chickens so easily...?"

Maybe I should start with fertile eggs, thought Shizuko who felt a little bit worried.

Just as one thought, Mori Yoshinari gave Shizuko a wondering look when he heard about the chickens. It was regarded as a sacred bird which told them about time, it was treated as an important pet, and they didn't consider wild bird's meat and chicken's egg to be used as food at all. In the first place, Shizuko recalled that the egg industry had originated from the Edo period. She couldn't obtain one male and female after all. Her initial worries proved to be right, there was a need for fertilized eggs to nurture new hatchlings/chicks.

Since it was a period where there was no incubator, there was a need for creating one from the material on hand, surprisingly this could be solved easily. The solution was a hot spring. Originally the wasted hot water was dumped into the river so she considered making a place for a pseudo incubator using that heat. First of all, she had to build a small hut around where the wasted hot water ran and varnish the floor with lacquer tree to make it waterproof. That could be used for a simple underfloor heating. Soil and rice husk would be used to cover the floor which could be used for a place to easily collect wild bird's feathers, like ducks.

It was simple if it was put in words but the quickest time needed to build one was a fortnight, even more, it took three weeks to finish including the needed temporary poultry farm. While preparing, regarding transporting the chicken, Mori Yoshinari said a cruel remark saying that transporting the chickens would take two weeks.

Harvesting the sweet potatoes was still ongoing while the poultry farm and the pseudo incubator were being built. The one week dried sweet potatoes became very popular with the villagers with its moderate sweetness. However, since there was a large amount of cultivated potatoes, there was a need to create "Potato's hole" to preserve them in the middle of harvesting. Dig a deep hole, lay out the straws, and then put the potatoes in, lastly put the rice husks in and put the soil in to keep the heat in tightly. Set up a signboard to make it easy to understand and further decide the sequential order of digestion by writing numbers.

However, that wasn't all. Simultaneously processing the dried sweet potatoes was a bit complicated but there was a benefit in that the potatoes could be eaten even if there was a bit of mold.

The method to make it was a little bit complex but it got easier once one got used to it. After the harvest, the sweet potatoes were exposed to the cold so, devising a way to

saccharify them, we steamed them for an hour or two... then placed the peeled sweet potatoes in a bamboo mat and sun-dried them for about one hour. Placed them in pots and kept them in cool dark place and there would be no problems.

With this, there would be no problems regarding food until the spring next year, and a considerable improvement in nutrition could be expected. It was no exaggeration to say that they have surplus foods since they kept the pumpkins adequately too.

“The harvest is close to finish... it’s roasted sweet potatoes for the harvest festival!!”

To celebrate a good harvest, Shizuko proposed to hold a roasted sweet potatoes festival using the harvested potatoes. Naturally, the villagers raised no objection.



From now on, Shizuko and co would have sweet potato as their staple food in their livelihood after harvest finished. Although one might say that their staple would continue until the next year’s harvest, their nutritional balance would break in different meaning if it continued for a long time. In the end, the sweet potato was only an emergency ration at that time, still counted as a supplementary food but rice could be used as staple food and regular diet.

(There will be about 12 tons for 2 hectares. If it’s counted in rice bag then it will be around 200 pieces... however, that is when there is an abundant harvest. If it’s simply calculated, around 10 tons maybe?)

In the modern times, the rice yield from 10 acres land was 10 rice bags and 100 rice bags from 1 hectares became the standard. Since a rice bag was 60 kg then the total amount was 6000 kg- in other words, 6 tons was the standard. However, that was about several hundred years later from Sengoku period. Since the farming technique was low, obtaining a ton from the same sized land(an acre) if possible was considered good. If they were using the farming technique from Sengoku period though.

“Well, whatever happens, happens-”

“Is there something wrong, Village chief?”

Yoichi -the former village chief- replied to Shizuko’s mutters.

“Hmm, I was thinking that we should produce rice starting next year”

“That’s right too. That sweet potato is delicious but I want to eat rice as expected~”

“I want to prepare about a hundred rice bags for our offering to our lord”

“A hundred bags, you say!?”

Yoichi showed a surprised face and raised his voice to the Shizuko who innocently said those words.

“Umm... village chief? Do you seriously think that we able to get that amount of harvest?”

“But we have to discard all of the cultivation technique used until now~. We are without a doubt getting an abundant harvest by using my technique, right~”

“Haa... well, if village chief says so then I’ll believe it...”

“Village chief! I burnt the potato-!?”

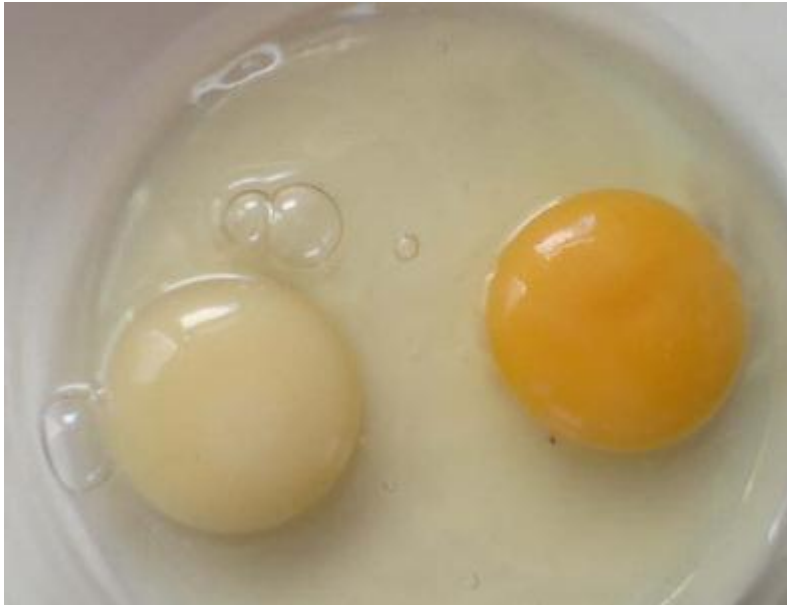
Kanezou’s voice came from a distant place when Shizuko was in the middle of replying to Yoichi who had a difficult expression.

“I’m going there right now! Well, I will explain it next year”

Yoichi felt a hunch that they would have an abundant harvest for the next year rice yield by looking at the happy-looking Shizuko for some reason.

Footnote:

1. Something like this.



Chapter 12

Mid October 1565

There were five large holes and around thirty pots of steamed potatoes were lined up in the shelves inside of them.

There was an abundant harvest for sweet potatoes this year. It clearly declared that they wouldn't have any trouble regarding food until summer next year even if they used only sweet potatoes. Furthermore, it wasn't only able to fill one's stomach but also had a sweet taste. So it was understandable that the villagers got excited. In the first place, any food which tasted sweet was treated as high class food in the Sengoku period.

“Roast~ Roasted potatoes~”

While watching a bowl of roasted potatoes, Shizuko let out a happy sounding mumble. The sweet smell wafted faintly as if provoking her stomach. It was the same with the villagers, they swallowed their saliva when looking at the mountain of roasted sweet potatoes.

“It seems that everyone is already gathered here. Everyone, let's pick the potatoes-”

With Shizuko's voice as cue, the villagers as far she could see swarmed the mountain of roasted sweet potatoes. The mountain of sweet potatoes completely disappeared within a minute.

“Village chief, please give us a word or two”

Contrary to her expectations that the villagers would start eating as is, they turned to Shizuko. Although she was thinking that she wanted Ondō^[1], her back jolted from being stared at by thirty people at once.

“Eh~, well, I won't say long and difficult things”

Shizuko who cleared her throat after saying that was surprisingly in high spirits.

“Everyone, thank you for your hard work. It’s thanks to everyone that we have an abundant harvest of sweet potatoes. Let’s drink and eat to the fullest today! And hope for abundant harvest next year!?”

“Yeaaaaa-!”

When Shizuko raised the potato in her hand high in the sky, the villagers raised their potatoes too as if to respond to it. It was surreal in a way but their motivation was more important more than anything. Let’s say that it wasn’t too good to mind every little detail.

Shizuko’s voice was a cue to start the festival.

“Well then, my golden potato-san. What kind of taste do you have~”

Shizuko slowly peeled it’s skin while watching the villagers who ate their potatoes with the skin on get choked up. She felt a cheerful feeling differing from her age every time she saw golden color when she peeled the potato.

“Ohh, it certainly looks delicious”

When she peeled one third of the skin, a voice suddenly came from behind. She turned around in response to the voice but her hand which grasped the potato was strongly pulled before that.

“Uh huh. The moderate sweetness is delicious”

The man who pulled Shizuko’s hand presumptuously bit the sweet potato in her hand. About half of the peeled part of the potato was instantly gone. However she didn’t say any complaints towards that person, on the contrary, she was shocked and frightened to the point of trembling all over.

“M, MMMMMMMMMMMilord!?”

The person who ate Shizuko’s potato was Oda Nobunaga, her master.

“Dried sweet potato, huh. It’s moderate texture and sweetness is a delicacy”

“Yes...”

Nobunaga who ate the served dried potatoes looked at Shizuko's stunned expression. Shizuko didn't receive any messages regarding the visit, as expected since it was really a sudden visit.

"Umm, Milord. What kind of business for your visit today?"

"I'm going to use the hot spring before departing to the front(war). And I have a task for you too"

(Departing... ahh, it's about time to attack Mino)

It was said that Oda Nobunaga became a daimyo who owned two provinces, Owari and Mino, in the tenth year of Eiroku Era (1567). It was written in Nobunaga's biography named "Shinchō kōki" that he ruled Mino around August. Although the exact time was unknown, it seemed that there was a royal decree from Emperor Ogimachi to Nobunaga contained an order to restoring goryosho(shogunate's estate) in Mino province on 9 November in the tenth year of the Eiroku Era. With that as a basis, it was good enough to say that Nobunaga ruled Mino by tenth year of Eiroku Era (1567).

Of course, there were various skirmishes before that happened. Shizuko understood that one of these will happen soon.

"...Eh? For me?"

She couldn't understand that there was a task for her regarding the war. Shizuko couldn't but to tilt her head since she didn't know what kind of important matter her lord needed her to do.

"Regarding the villagers here and the newly added fifty farmers. They won't be taken to the battlefield. Instead, you need to use them to reform this place into a great production base"

"Eh, eehh?"

"After that, I can receive these dried sweet potatoes"

"Yes... that is not a problem. But why are you ordering us to make a production base?"

Although Shizuko did think to increase the production from the very beginning, it

wasn't an order from Nobunaga but simply from her own plan. Therefore it seemed strange to Shizuko that there was suddenly an order from Nobunaga to change this place to a production base.

"...You, what do you think about this country?"

That was a sudden question to Shizuko. Although Shizuko was ready to answer, Nobunaga wasn't expecting any answer but he was simply want to say that. That was why, Nobunaga kept talking without caring that Shizuko was ready to answer his question.

"Even now, skirmishes between fellow daimyo keep continue. The country and it's people are already exhausted. So we have to unify the country soon. Otherwise we will be left behind by Nanban and Ming"

Nobunaga said that after wearing a thinking expression for a brief period.

"Therefore I feel that your talk about [National Prosperity and Defence] is necessary to begin with. It is absolutely impossible without a strong foundation such as unifying this country"

After saying that far, Nobunaga inhaled grandly and then slowly exhaled it out.

"Shizuko, perhaps there won't be any lords that understand your achievements. However I know your achievements. And the difficulty of carrying out mass production with a small number of people"

"Thank you very much"

"For this reason, I order you to begin mass producing rice. Your role, I will certainly give it to you"

Shizuko deeply lowered her head in response to Nobunaga's words, who wore a thin smile. Shizuko felt a strange feeling. What Nobunaga said was an order and there was no guarantee that she would receive a reward when she fulfilled her order. However her strange feeling didn't turn into an unpleasant feeling. Rather it turned into a feeling of wanting to know how far Nobunaga would go.

"Once we unify this country, we will make a country that exceeds even the Ming and the Nanban after that. Then-"

Shizuko knew. She knew that Nobunaga who talked about his dream would never be able to unify the country. About his life would end in the midst of his dream because of rebellion.

Even so, Shizuko still wanted to know. Just how far he would walk his path. Shizuko wanted to know from the bottom of her heart about how Nobunaga went through his life for an instance.

(Not the Nobunaga who was written down in history. What I want to know is the Nobunaga who stands in front of me)

In the end, almost all of the dried potatoes which were made by Shizuko and co were brought back by Nobunaga. But it could be said that it was better than being ordered to go to the battlefield. Normally the harvest would be collected as a tax and the farmers who were able to work were taken to the battlefield.

“Increase the harvest amount in accordance with Shizuko. That is your duty!”

Nobunaga announced the villagers from horseback. Shizuko understood intuitively. Regarding Nobunaga’s intention to strengthen the foundation of his country.

(In several years until reaching the capital phase, do you plan to make a national base exceeding common sense?)

In the Sengoku period, the amount of rice and crop harvest varied depending on the number of farmers and the land. There were no concepts of mass production nor effective farming techniques. The harvested amount couldn’t even reach the lowest amount of harvest in the modern era and it could be said that the amount of harvest was nearly up for the fates to decide.

“Milord, please expect us. Next year from now on, please be surprised at the amount of rice harvest we will bring”

However Shizuko was mistaken. In her head, there was a cultivation technique invented in between Sengoku period and Modern era. By using modern era’s knowledge, the harvested amount was remarkably varied even by using only the cultivation technique.

“Hoho, I’m looking forward to that”

Nobunaga laughed at Shizuko who could look straight into his eyes. Several of the villagers seemed wanting to shriek only from that sight but it was only Shizuko who thinly smiled back to Nobunaga.

It wasn't like she had absolute confidence. There was no use applying modern era common sense to the Sengoku period. Even though she did bring tools from modern era during the time slip, it wasn't so almighty that it could clear any problems with it. Since she had to prepare spare tools when they were broken, it couldn't be readily used until it broke. And yet she smiled.

It was fun. It was so fun that she couldn't help but to smile. She couldn't help herself because cultivating the land and producing a large amount of harvest from it was fun for her.

"By fully making use of my knowledge, please look at which country is able to and not able to imitate the same yield as us"

"Such great self-confidence. Then work hard so that you won't only amount to only a great talker"

"I can't say that my success this far is mine alone. However, for me, I have people who followed me for nearly six months. And if I join effort with them, I will surely succeed"

Shizuko who said so turned her eyes to the villagers.

She was fully understood that the harvests until now weren't successes because of her efforts alone. It was precisely because of she got the villager's cooperation that she succeed in harvesting sweet potatoes and corns.

They were inexperienced people who looked less than 20 years old but they silently followed her. At first they reluctantly went along her because of threats but they were tied with a strong bond now. That was why Shizuko was convinced that she wouldn't fail next time.

"Haha! I'm looking forward to it, then!"

After saying so, Nobunaga turned his horse neck as if saying that it was the end of their talk. Shizuko who saw that deeply lowered her head and the villagers who saw Shizuko hurriedly lowered their head. Shizuko still lowered her head when she could heard horse's hoof and she slowly raised her head soon after she couldn't hear it.

Naturally there was no Nobunaga's figure there.

“*Sigh* I will face all sort of troubles huh”

She didn't seem like the person just now who brimming with self-confidence when talking to Nobunaga, her voice just now was tinged with a bit of easygoing.

[1] Part of the Japanese Obon celebration involves participating in the local community dance. The tradition of the Bon dance, or Bon odori (盆踊り), dates back a few hundred years, and it is usually accompanied by the local tune. In recent times, new music has been used for Bon dance accompaniment, including late enka hits and music written specifically for bon dancing. The “ondo” rhythm has always been common in Japanese folk music, but even the newer music written for Bon dances has been written in this style.



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